

I Believe You

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I Believe You

by [roaming4040](#)

Summary

During Will's incarceration at Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, tensions rise between the nurses as some get more protective of Will than others.

Chapter 1

“How do you feel, Mr Graham?” Dr Frederick Chilton’s voice echoed in Will Graham’s mind.

The doctor stood across from him, hand clutching his sturdy, wooden cane and awaiting an answer from his drugged-up patient.

Will sat, arms and legs strapped to a metal chair bound to the floor, with an IV needle in the crook of his elbow feeding him with God knows what.

“Mr Graham, I want you to look at me,” Chilton barked, picking up the clipboard off the side table and eyeing Will’s medical record for the day.

Will strained to lift his heavy head and make eye-contact with the doctor.

“I asked you a question,” Chilton reminded. “How do you feel?”

“I can’t feel anything,” Will replied groggily.

“Could you elaborate a bit more?” Chilton asked, a low undertone of frustration under his voice.

“I feel numb...I can’t feel my limbs.” Will explained softly.

“Emotionally, how do you feel?” Chilton asked.

“...I...I feel trapped...” Will finally confessed.

“Trapped because you know that what you did was real and there is no way to escape your fate? Or trapped in your mind?” Chilton asked.

Will frowned and grimaced up at the doctor.

“Because I...I can’t move...” Will reiterated.

Chilton sighed angrily and set down his clipboard and walked up to Will. Even though Will was clearly restrained and drugged out of his mind, Chilton still approached him with caution.

“Will, the purpose of these sessions are to uncover past memories. The sodium pentothal is to help you. Try your best to explain exactly what is going through your mind right now. I’m going to ask you again- How do you feel?” Chilton repeated.

Will furrowed his brow and looked down at his wrists, bound to the chair’s arms with sheepskin restraints. He tugged lightly against them and flexed his hands, watching as his veins bulge and bones shift under his pale skin.

“I feel empty,” Will finally spoke. “Like a husk.”

“Could it be you killed those girls to feel less empty?— To fill whatever void inside you that was swallowing you up?” Chilton questioned. “I never killed any of those girls,” Will snapped, his hands curling into fists.

“Yes, you did. Denying it will only be detrimental to your treatment.”

“I didn’t do it!” Will yelled back.

“You don’t remember doing it, but you did. My job is to help you remember,” Chilton said angrily.

“I can’t remember something I didn’t do…” Will mumbled.

Chilton frowned and picked up the clipboard and pen. Under “Patient: Will Graham, Day 36: Session #12,” Chilton scribbled: “Unproductive.”

“There are consequences for non-compliance, Mr Graham. I’m expecting progress soon, or else I’ll have to take further action,” he warned. Chilton snapped his fingers and two burly men in white uniforms entered the room with a wheelchair.

They approached Will and unstrapped him from the metal chair, disconnected him from the IV and plopped him down in the wheelchair roughly. They wrapped a single canvas strap around his chest to prevent him from falling out of the chair, as they rolled him out of the room and down the corridor.

Will tried to lift his arms and struggle, but whatever Chilton gave him made his limbs feel like jelly.

They rolled him down the main cell block where other inmates would shout and swear as he was wheeled past. When they finally arrived at Will’s cell, one guard opened the large barred door and the other rolled the patient through.

The guards unstrapped him from the chair, lifted him, and laid him down on the cot, arms laying at his sides limply.

“Will?” A friendly voice arose from down the hall.

Will opened his eyes and tilted his head up towards the gate.

A short, squat man with a round, kind face and dark skin appeared in the doorway, smiling softly with a small medical bag in hand.

“Barney…” Will mumbled, trying to sit up but to no avail.

“Don’t try and get up. I’m just here to get your vitals,” The nurse named Barney spoke, pacing through through the doorway and nodding silently to the guards who let him pass. Will sighed and laid back down on the cot as Barney kneeled down beside him and took his wrist to check his pulse.

Barney was the only nurse at Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane that treated Will like an actual person. He’d come by on his shift and have conversations with Will, reminding him that he’s human and not just a caged animal for Chilton to poke and prod. It was one of the only glimmer of sunshine in Will’s rainy life.

“How was today’s session?” Barney asked.

Will shrugged.

“He’s been drugging you during the sessions again, hasn’t he? The sodium pentothal slows down your pulse— I can tell. I would stand up for you if it didn’t mean losing my position.” Barney whispered to him as he held Will’s limp wrist, counting the moments between each, slow pulse.

“I don’t know what to do ‘bout it...” Will slurred, letting his eyes softly shut from exhaustion.

“I know, I know...” Barney coo’d.

“So I’m going to guess it wasn’t a good session.” Barney commented, writing down

“Yeah, it was bad,” Will answered.

“Bad?” Barney hummed, reaching into his medical bag to pull out a black blood-pressure cuff and wrapping it around Will’s right bicep.

“I shouldn’t be in here,” Will grumbled, wincing as the cuff inflated around his arm.

“I know...” Barney replied softly.

“No, I’m serious! I didn’t kill those girls!” Will barked, raising his voice and sitting up slightly.

The guards behind them straightened their posture a bit, becoming more wary of Will’s actions.

“Please, calm down, Will-“ Barney spoke up, putting a hand over Will’s chest and encouraging him to lay back down. “You wouldn’t want Chilton’s dogs to interfere...” He whispered, eyeing the men in white coats.

“I don’t belong here. None of this is right,” Will explained, lowering his voice.

Barney sighed and unwrapped the cuff and placed it back in his bag. He picked up a stethoscope from his medical bag and placed each earpiece in his ears. He gently reached over and unbuttoned the first few buttons on Will’s parka-brown uniform. Will silently appreciated Barney’s gentleness in handling him. By not recoiling or acting visibly nervous around him, it made him feel less like the prisoner he was.

“Take a deep breath please,” Barney directed, sliding the cool disk under Will’s uniform and placing it over Will’s pectoral.

Will took in a breath, but his emotions took control over him and he let it out with a whimper.

Barney paused and looked down at Will and noticed that he was beginning to cry.

“What do I have to do to get someone to believe me?” Will whined, tears welling up in his pale green eyes. Barney listened closely to his elevated heartbeat before finally speaking up.

He turned briefly to the guards and then lowered his voice to a whisper so only Will could hear.

“...I believe you, Will.”

Will sniffled and looked up at the nurse. “You do?”

“You’re not like any other patient I’ve worked with. I don’t believe you have the mind of a killer,” Barney explained. He paused and looked down at Will’s chest again. “Your heartbeat...it slowed down just now,” the nurse commented quietly.

Will choked back a sob and tossed his head against the pillow underneath him.

Barney finally raised his voice to normal volume and stood up with his medical bag in hand.

“I’ll give you some space,” Barney said quietly, turning to leave, stethoscope still around his neck.

“Wait-“ Will called, grabbing Barney’s wrist.

“Hey!” The guards yelled, approaching the bars. Inmates touching visitors- hospital staff or otherwise— was strictly forbidden and could be punishable.

Will let go of the nurse’s hand but made clean eye contact with him as Barney was quickly escorted out.

“Thank you,” Will called to him as he left and the bars were shut, leaving Will alone to himself once again.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Matthew gets jealous...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Nurse Matthew Brown peered down at the security camera feed from Will's cell and scowled as he watched Barney work so gently with Will.

In the many weeks that Will had been in treatment at the Baltimore State Hospital for the criminally insane, Matthew had developed a deep fascination with the patient. Will was quiet, mysterious, and devastatingly handsome, and Matthew was immediately intrigued from day 1. He had never felt this way about a patient before. As soon as Matthew was officially designated Will's primary nurse, he made a clear effort to gain Will's trust. He tried to talk to Will, or get Will to talk to him. He would try to spend as much time with him as possible and be at Will's every call. He even asked if he could deliver Will's meals to him so Will would subconsciously associate him with food or reward and thus find him more of an ally than a guard. None of it seemed to work. Will would refuse to talk to him most of the time or turn away when he would walk by his cell. Matthew genuinely lost sleep thinking about why he wasn't favorable with his favorite patient, or what about him was repelling to him, which was why he was absolutely furious watching Barney, a nurse who had only been on Will's case for a week or two, gain Will's acknowledgement and trust so quickly.

"I don't belong here. None of this is right," Will's voice sighed.

Matthew frowned and watched in confusion as Barney gently undid Will's top buttons on his jumpsuit.

He could never remember Will letting him get that close.

"Take a deep breath please," Barney's voice directed in the video as he listened to his heart beat.

"What do I have to do to get someone to believe me?" Will's voice echoed under a sob.

Matthew paused and turned back to the video curiously. He had never seen Will so... vulnerable before. He watched as Barney leaned down to whisper something to Will that was inaudible for the camera to pick up, and immediately after, Will's small pixilated face melted completely into a soft smile. Matthew watched, absolutely fuming as Will grabbed Barney's wrist and muttered a soft *"thank you."*

Matthew angrily turned away from the tapes, resting his elbows on his knees and angrily running his hands through his short, black, greasy hair. Will was his patient. Barney had no right to try and take what was his.

He quickly stood up, grabbed his white coat from the door hanger, and rushed out into the main hallway. He speed-walked down the vacant, white corridor, firmly set on whatever he was bound to do. He had a turn towards the main cell block and spotted Barney beside the two guards walking back up the way he came. He made firm eye contact with the short, chubby nurse, gaze piercing through his, as they passed each other.

Matthew finally made his way to Will's cell. He was quietly resting on his side on the sturdy cot, still heavily drugged.

"Graham!" Matthew barked, banging a fist against the bars to startle him.

Will barely flinched.

"Mr Graham!" Matthew yelled again.

"*What...*" Will grumbled, curling up tighter in on himself.

"What was that just now?" Matthew asked angrily.

Will didn't respond.

"What did he say to you?!" Matthew yelled.

"I don't have to talk to you about anything," Will grumbled.

"Yes, you do. I'm in charge of you, remember. You will do as I say. Now tell me what he said to you!" Matthew exclaimed.

Will lifted his head and glared at the nurse, holding strict eye contact before angrily resting his head back on the cot again.

Matthew glanced back down the empty hall towards the entrance where nurses and doctors entered and exited from.

"I can make it worth your while..." Matthew said calmly, turning back to Will.

Will frowned and slowly sat up, attempting to gain some stability in the storm of dizziness he was experiencing.

"What could someone like you do for me?" he slurred.

“I could tell you when Chilton is going to hold one of his special therapy sessions. The ones where he gives you the drugs. It won’t change when or how they happen, but it’ll give you some security—hopefully make things seem a little less unpredictable.” Matthew explained.

Will just stared at Matthew in confusion.

“I can do more than you think,” he added calmly.

“...Why are you doing this?” Will asked.

“I-I care about you, Will. I really do.” Matthew confessed.

Will stared at the nurse in absolute silence before finally speaking up.

“He told he believed me, ok?” Will explained. “He said he believed that I wasn’t a killer.”

Matthew raised an eyebrow in skepticism.

“Really...” he mumbled.

“Yeah...That’s it. *Now* will you leave me alone?” Will snarled.

Matthew sighed, nodded softly and left.

He had greater matters to attend to now.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter 3 is on the way!

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Matthew quickly tells off Barney.

Chapter Notes

Sorry short chapter today guys! The next chapter is where things start to turn...

Matthew was fuming. ‘There had to be a rule against trying to befriend patients,’ he thought. Perhaps it could count as inappropriate behavior? Either way, Matthew knew he was insanely jealous and had to set the record straight with Barney about boundaries.

Barney sat in the break room, snacking on a turkey sandwich he’d brought from home before he heard a disgruntled Matthew busted through the door. The shorter, skinny nurse turned and met eyes with Barney as he slowly approached his table.

“Nurse Brown...Matthew is it?” Barney spoke up.

“Don’t try and cozy up to me, Barney. I know what you’re about,” Matthew barked.

“...Excuse me?” Barney replied, utterly confused.

“I’ve seen all the tapes. Don’t think nobody’s listening.”

“I-I don’t know what you’re talking about...” was all Barney could say.

“Graham! Will Graham! Cozying up to him won’t win you any points or make you any safer. He’s a cold-blooded killer and a master manipulator- and he’s my patient—don’t forget that,” Matthew snapped.

Barney could only stare in confusion. “Are you talking about...”

“I’m talking about you nuzzling up to Graham...telling him you believed he was innocent,” Matthew replied.

“There’s no harm in showing a bit of kindness. He’s treated like an animal here,” Barney replied honestly. “And he just looked so sad- I couldn’t help but-“

“He’s deranged, Barney. Wake up. He’s a killer and should be treated that way. Whatever you’re trying to do,” Matthew growled, “end it before I report you to Chilton.”

And on that note, Matthew promptly left the room, leaving Barney in a confused and startled state.

Dr Chilton sat at his desk reading the newest addition of Psychology Today magazine before he was interrupted by a harsh knocking on his office door.

"Come in..." he called.

Matthew opened the door and walked in, hands behind his back.

"Nurse Brown...Take a seat," Chilton called, gesturing to the chair on the other side of the desk.

"I won't be here for long. I'm just here to report an instance of inappropriate behavior I've witnessed."

Chilton closed his magazine and set it aside, directing all attention to the nurse.

“I know we’re not supposed to have any sort of personal relationship with our patients,” Matthew began, “which includes friendly relationships if I remember correctly.”

Chilton nodded silently.

“I was watching the tapes on Will Graham’s cell and...I noticed one of the nurses having conversations with him after one of your sessions.”

Chilton furrowed his brow. “Really...” he mumbled.

“Trying to talk to him about his situation in the hospital...I thought it was a bit too personal over professional and wanted to report it to you,” Matthew finished.

“Who was this nurse?” Chilton asked.

“Nurse Barney Matthews, sir.”

Chilton’s confused expression melted immediately.

“You needn’t worry about Barney. He’s just gentle, he talks that way to everyone,” Chilton explained.

“B-But sir...”

“Barney is a fine nurse. The way he does his work is different than yours, but I wouldn’t be worried in the slightest. Thank you for your concern, Nurse Brown, but you have nothing to be concerned over. You’re dismissed,” Chilton claimed, picking up his magazine and continuing where he left off, leaving Matthew absolutely furious as he stormed out of the room, but taking effort to close the door as politely as he could.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Matthew acts on his desires...

Chapter Notes

I'm so sorry I'm the slowest writer ever. Here's chapter 4! Chapter 5 is on the way..

~ One week later ~

Matthew watched the security tapes again during his nightshift, specifically eyeing the camera pointed in Will's cell. He watched as the raggedy man sat laid on the bed, tucked in a fetal position. Matthew could clearly see Will was awake because of his tense body language and uneven breathing. He carefully eyed the screen directly south to eye Barney walking down the hallway, crying a tray of medical equipment and heading to the storage closet. Matthew checked his wristwatch and eyed the schedule on the wall of all the employees. Barney will be just about heading home- it was the perfect time to initiate his plan. He slowly pressed a small red button, shutting off the camera on Will's cell and the camera leading down the cellblock hallway.

He snuck quietly out of the security room and hurried down the hall, speed-walking into the medical wing and grabbing a gurney with a set of sheepskin restraints. He pushed the gurney down the hall while he set a duffle bag down on it and quickly unzipped it with one hand. He rushed the gurney down the hall and into the main cell block. He tried to be as quiet as possible in an effort to not wake of any of the other inmates in the cells before Will's. Finally, he made it to the end of the block to Will's cell, where he found him resting on his side in the same position that he left him in.

"Graham," Matthew whispered, taking the key to his cell in his hand and opening the door quietly.

Will groaned in annoyance.

“Graham, come on. It’s uh...Chilton’s ordered another check-up,” Matthew told him.

“Ugh...fine,” Will groaned, slowly sitting up on the cot and rubbing his eyes. He groaned and looked up, noticing the duffle bag onto of the gurney labeled “M. Brown.”

“What’s that for?” Will asked, pointing to the duffle bag.

“Don’t ask questions. Come on, now. You’re gonna be late for your check up, Remember?” Matthew said, looking down the hallway nervously.

“...But I just had one yesterday,” Will barked back, sitting up and glaring at the nurse.

“Change of plans. It’s urgent. Now come on, you know the drill,” Matthew said, stepping through the door and holding a pair of unlocked handcuffs.

“Urgent? But I feel fine...and it’s almost 11...and Chilton doesn’t do night shifts,” Will mumbled, his eyes glancing back at the gurney behind Matthew.

“Don’t ask questions, come on,”

“This...This doesn’t feel right...”

“Get on the gurney, Will,” Matthew ordered. “We’re going for a ride.”

“What’s happening? What are you doing?” Will called, standing up.

Clearly he was confused and didn't trust Matthew for a second.

"I said...get on the gurney, or I'll have to use force."

"HELP!" Will screamed, trying to call out to any other staff member nearby, but the hall was clear.

"HELP PL-" he cried before Matthew pounced on him, holding a hand over his mouth with one hand and readying the syringe with the other hand. He then cried out in pain as Will promptly bit his hand and kicked him off, sending Matthew tumbling into the wall behind him. Will tried to get back on his feet, but Matthew easily recovered and yanked Will's ankle, causing him to trip and fall on his stomach with a thud. The nurse grabbed Will's hands and held them behind him, while he straddled him, sitting on his lower back. Before Will could pull his hands away, Matthew quickly handcuffed him, his hands uncomfortably positioned behind his back while he lied on his stomach on the concrete floor.

"I'm sorry, Will. I didn't want to do this, but it's for your own good," he heard Matthew say as he groaned and tried to crank his head back as much as he could to see what the nurse was doing. It was then that he saw Matthew take out a full syringe and tapping it, releasing all the air bubbles.

"GET OFF M-" Will tried to scream, but Matthew's hand clasped over Will's mouth, silencing him. While Will tried to struggle or throw Matthew off him to no avail, Matthew used his other hand to steady the syringe and press it precisely into Will's lower back. Will shrieked and violently thrashed under him, his wrists rubbing raw under the handcuffs.

"It's alright, Will— You're gonna start feeling a little sleepy- that's all..." Matthew answered, setting the empty syringe down on the ground and letting go of Will's mouth. "What the hell did you...did you do to..." Will cried out, but immediately found his eyelids becoming increasingly heavier and heavier and his body stop answering to his commands

"Take it easy, there we go," Matthew hushed, getting to his feet and taking a step back. Will laid still, the side of his face pressed against the cold, concrete floor, his eyes filled with panic. Matthew got down on one knee, resting one hand over Will's back to monitor his breathing and placing two fingers over Will's neck to check his pulse. Will recoiled immediately.

“D’nt f’ckin touch m...” Will groaned, his voice straining and his vision blurring.

“Shhh...I’m going to take good care of you, Will. Just take a deep breath- you’re going to be alright.”

Will only whimpered in reply.

It was clear that Will was trying everything in his power to fight the drugs that were swarming through his system, but he was eventually overpowered and his eyes gently closed and his breathing regulated.

Matthew smiled and quickly removed the handcuffs, rolling Will on his back. All he could think was how beautiful the inmate was; his curly brown hair swept back, his soft, pale skin shimmering under the flickering ceiling lights, the gentle rise and fall of his chest.

Without wasting any time, Matthew lifted his patient up fire-fighter style and plopped him on the gurney. He tied down his arms and legs and threw a teal surgical sheet over him. He flung the duffle bag over his shoulder and shut the cell door, locking it behind him. He then rushed the gurney down the hall and through the doors. Several guards stood across the walls like tin soldiers and eyed Matthew and his captive suspiciously, but as Matthew nodded and showed them his badge, they nodded back and let him pass.

Matthew pushed the gurney down through the many halls and finally to the parking lot.

“Matthew?” A voice behind him rung.

Matthew spun around to find Barney, wrapped in his coat over his scrubs and a red scarf around his neck, clearly about to head home from work.

“Barney...” Matthew breathed.

“What’s this?” Barney asked, gesturing to the gurney, Will’s body being covered by the sheet.

“Just um...a body- I’m transferring it to the morgue across town,” Matthew explained.

“A body?” Barney asked, clearly concerned. It was rare of the BSHCI to have any deaths in patients, especially with such an efficient staff of nurses and doctors on hand. “How did he die? Who is it?”

“Uh, heart attack...and nobody...” Matthew answered. “Now if you’ll excuse me,” he added, wheeling the gurney past Barney and back down the hall to the parking lot. Barney watched in confusion as he hurried away, clearly in a rush.

Barney raised an eyebrow, but shrugged it off. Matthew had always been a little awkward at work, but he clearly had somewhere to go and Barney wouldn’t want to get in the way of whatever important work he was doing. He buttoned up his coat and headed back on his way.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

So sorry for the insanely late update! There IS an ending to this story, however, so stay tuned!

Chilton discovers Will's absence and sets out a recovery force

One by one, alarms began to sound in the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. Will Graham, an unstable man with a criminal, homicidal history had escaped. Despite being in the middle of the night, Chilton arrived only minutes after he got the call that Will's cell was found empty. He immediately called for a thorough search of the hospital- every nook and corner of the building was to be checked.

"This is impossible! How could this have happened?!" Chilton screamed as a team of the head security guards stood nervously in a line in front of him.

"Sir, there was no way he could have gotten through us. We're lined at every entrance and exit in the buildi-" one of the guards tried to explain.

"And yet he did, Mr Peterson. You're lucky I don't fire you all for your incompetence," Chilton huffed, running a hand through his hair. "You all had ONE job- ONE. And now the Chesapeake Ripper is OUT THERE-" he barked, pointing his cane towards the window looking outside the front gates, "-where he can and will kill again!"

The team of guards looked sternly forward, clearly distraught at their fatal error.

Suddenly, the small phone on Chilton's desk began to ring and just as the guards slowly began to exit the room, Chilton's finger snapped and pointed to them to stay. They looked at each other and moved back into their orderly line.

Chilton picked up the receiver and held it to his ear anxiously.

"Dr Chilton speaking," he spoke.

"Dr Chilton, this is the department of security. We have the results of the security tapes from tonight," a voice called back.

"Excellent. What did you find?" Chilton responded.

“It appears that...all security cameras were temporarily turned off between the minutes of 10:58pm and 11:15pm. This not only includes the cameras from Mr Graham’s cell, but all the hallways leading from his cell into the lobby, and out to the parking garage on the bottom floor,” the voice reported.

“Impossible...” Chilton muttered.

“All cameras A, C, E, D, and F were all automatically turned back on at 11:16pm and that’s when Mr Graham’s cell showed empty. Would you like to send units out and inform civilians of-“

“No. We cannot let the public know. Send me the tapes from immediately before and after, and that’ll be all, thank you,” Chilton replied before abruptly hanging up and turning back to the guards.

“...You are dismissed,” he told them as they politely nodded and exited to continue their search for the missing inmate.

Chilton sighed, and made his way over to the chair behind his desk. He rested his elbows on the surface of the desk and ran his hands over his face exasperatingly and waited for news- hopefully good. His biggest embarrassment, however, was knowing that due to the manipulation of the cameras, this escape was almost positively an inside job.

As the crime scene investigation crew arrived to the scene of Will’s empty cell, they immediately began their work. They dusted for fingerprints around the doors, the benches, and the walls along the hallway. It wasn’t long after searching under the bed that they found an astonishing piece of evidence.

“Shit...you’ll want to get Dr. Chilton for this...” one of the investigators called over the walkie.

Followed by two guards, Chilton was down in the cellblock in almost no time at all. He hurried down the hall and rushed to the scene, stopping in the doorway.

“What is it? What did you find?” Chilton asked them in a huff.

A woman in a white plastic suit and blue mask slowly picked up the found item with blue gloved hands and held it up to him silently.

Chilton’s heart sunk and his blood ran cold.

It was an empty syringe.

Chilton turned around to the guard behind him and snapped, “Get me Jack Crawford.”

Jack Crawford, Alana Bloom, and Hannibal were all called to Baltimore State Hospital to discuss the situation. Alana and Hannibal both sat in the two chairs facing Chilton's desk while Jack paced back and forth around the carpet nervously. He had already heard the news of Will's escape- he was just begrudgingly awaiting to hear it from Chilton himself.

"I'm sure you're all aware of the status on Will," Chilton began, before being interrupted by his trembling audience.

"Have they found him yet?" Alana asked, fumbling with the arm rest on the chair.

Hannibal, who remained surprisingly calm through the ordeal, gently placed a hand over Alana's supportively.

"No, not yet. We know he couldn't have gotten too far. It's been less than twelve hours," Chilton replied before taking a deep breath to announce the newly-found piece of evidence.

"We have also come upon new evidence to believe that Will may have been kidnapped,"

"What?! What evidence?" Alana cried.

"A syringe carrying trace amounts of alfentanil and decamethonium, a common general anesthetic paired with a muscle relaxant, was found at the scene. Blood from the tip of the needle matches Will's DNA and the syringe is of the same brand we carry in our infirmary. We can infer that this was most likely an inside job and that Will was not complicit in his abducting. The kidnapper, or kidnappers, then found a way to enter his cell, sedate him, then conceal his body and get him not only out of the cell block, but out of the building in a matter of minutes," Chilton explained, folding his hands on his desk.

"Jesus..." Jack mumbled in disbelief.

"As we speak, we are currently background checking every one of our members of staff down to the janitors who mop the halls at night. I assure you all that no stone will be left unturned," Chilton promised, looking up from his hands to analyze the three's reaction to this news.

Jack seemed to be in a state of a mix of shock and disappointment, Alana looked absolutely heartbroken and Hannibal simply stared down at the carpet, contemplating Will's perspective in all this.

"How awful..." Alana muttered, a hand over her mouth in disbelief. "Poor Will," she added.

"Don't worry, Alana. I have faith that the police will find him sooner than we think," Hannibal comforted, and although he didn't necessarily believe in the statement, he hoped to god that it was true.

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Will wakes up.

Will's head pounded as his senses, one by one, started returning to him. His vision was swimming, there was a ringing in his ear, and he had a piercing headache that almost made him wish he was back to being unconscious. As he slowly became more aware, he tried to focus on where he was and what was happening to him, starting with what he remembered; Matthew waking him up and coming into his cell and tackling him, a needle in the back and...nothing- no memory beyond that point. At this very moment, Matthew was in the process of kidnapping him. His anxiety spiked and his heart felt like it was going to burst through his chest.

While he had studied at the police academy, he had learned about how to safely navigate a kidnapping situation, and the first and most important tip was to stay calm. He focused on keeping his breathing under control; slow and shallow, to appear that he was still unconscious, not move his eyes too much under his eyelids, and stay perfectly still as possible. Matthew was a nurse after all, he knows the difference between an awake man and a sleeping one.

Will tried opening his eyes but the light only made his headache worse and he immediately closed them again.

He stretched out his fingers and felt the surface he was laying under for clues on where he was. He felt the smooth leathery surface and came to a conclusion that he was laying on his back along the backseat of a car. He stealthily tried to move his arm but found them pinned. A wide strap was wrapped around his chest, holding them at his sides and his legs were shackled at the ankles. He knew that this was to be expected.

He could feel the vibration of the car under him and the rough turns, stops and starts that followed and in the silence, he tried to stop and focus on what he could do or how he might escape, but in all honesty, he had no idea where Matthew was taking him or what he planned to do with him, so devising any plan to retaliate was nearly impossible.

Before Will could finish a thought, the car came to a complete stop and he heard the drivers seat door open and shut, followed by the sound of footsteps on gravel. He used every fiber in his body to try and stay calm as the passenger door by his head opened. He could hear crickets chirping and didn't feel a light on his face so he figured it was still night out. He felt a hand, assumingly Matthew's, brush softly through his hair tenderly and a soft pressure of two fingers on the side of his neck.

His breathing and eye movement could be controlled, but the fear that was elevating his pulse was something that couldn't be stopped in the amount of time he had. Will was terrified, and this was very difficult to hide.

"Will?" Matthew's voice broke the silence.

Will didn't reply. It didn't even matter if Matthew knew he was awake or not-He wasn't going to talk to him anyway.

"Will, I know you're awake," Matthew added.

Still, he didn't respond and kept his mouth shut and his body perfectly still.

Matthew sighed and lifted Will up under his arms to pull him out. Will was dragged up and flipped over Matthew's shoulder firefighter-style, and the car door was shut behind him. Will opened his eyes as he was carried across the front yard, but his vision was still too blurred to make out anything but fuzzy shapes. Matthew stepped over the porch and casually unlocked the front door and stepped inside. Will's head spun with every step Matthew took and even as Matthew kicked the door close behind him and gently placed Will's limp form on the couch in the living room, Will could still barely guess where he was.

He tried opening his eyes again and squinting, trying to adjust his vision. Blobs became shapes, shapes became silhouettes, and silhouettes became furniture. He was lying supine on a dingy vintage couch in a small living room area with warm gray walls and a stone fireplace. Will noticed that the curtains were drawn and the door was bolted- again, this was to be expected.

As his eyes wandered around the room, he was interrupted by Matthew suddenly appearing in his vision, staring down at him like a child in a science class about to dissect the frog that was pinned down at the table before him. Will just stared back up at him silently. Matthew bent down on one knee and took out of a penlight from his coat. He gently pulled Will's left eyelid back and shone the light in his eyes. Will's pupils were abnormally large- which is normal for someone who'd just been heavily drugged.

"Good morning, Will," he finally spoke with a slight smile, turning off the penlight and sliding it back into his pocket. "How are you feeling?"

"What did you do to me?" Will asked, his word slurring slightly and his head still pounding.

"You're a smart man. You can figure that out for yourself," Matthew replied as-a-matter-of-factly.

"What do you want with me?" Will asked with a bland tone to his voice.

"...I thought you'd be more grateful for me busting you out of the hospital," Matthew commented.

It was true that Will was glad to be out of his tiny cell and away from the cameras and Chilton's poking and prodding, but it didn't make him feel any more safe now that he was in

the exclusive hands of his least favorite nurse.

“You drugged me...and you kidnapped me. Don’t expect me ta’ grovel at yur’ feet,” Will replied.

Even through all the brain-numbing anesthesia, Will was still a spitfire.

“I want you to take me back to the hospital,” Will growled in between breaths.

“No, I don’t think I’ll do that just yet,” Matthew answered, standing up.

“I’ve got to get your bed ready upstairs. Don’t even think of getting up to run. I gave you a muscle relaxant so even if you got out of the cuffs, you wouldn’t be able to do much but roll off the couch. I’ll be back in a second,” he said, heading up the stairs into the guest bedroom.

Will grumbled and listened to the pitter-patter of Matthew’s footsteps going up the wooden staircase and walking down the hall.

Will figured that the only way that Matthew was going to even consider letting him go was if he became the worst houseguest he could be, so just as Matthew’s footsteps became inaudible, Will forcibly threw himself off the couch and landed face-down on the wooden floor, singularly to spite his captor and add extra work of hauling him back up again.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Barney hears the news and Will tries to fight back.

Barney Matthews sat frozen in his chair clutching his cell phone after just receiving the call that Will was missing.

“He’s just...gone?!” He responded to the voice over the phone reporting the news.

The voice confirmed that Will Graham, just hours after Barney’s nightly vital check, was smuggled out of the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane.

“We need you to come in as soon as possible,” said the voice.

“Yes, of course. I’ll be there in fifteen,” Barney replied, trying to suppress his nervousness in the moment to seem as least-suspicious as he could.

Barney was a smart man; He knew that he was already a suspect, and he wanted to cooperate with law enforcement and Chilton or anyone that might suspect him.

The nurse quickly threw on his jacket, grabbed his keys and headed out to his car to head over to the hospital.

He hopped in the drivers seat, buckled himself in and started the ignition.

As he proceeded down the suburban pathway, his mind was racing. Very few people knew that Barney was one of the only members of the staff who believed that Will might be wrongfully accused, but in no way would that lead to him trying to break Will out in some act of vigilante justice. If anything, Barney would push Will to cooperate more with guards and doctors so his sentence or punishments might be a bit lighter. If Will was found, his sentence would no doubt be extended since it would automatically be presumed that Will had some sort of upper hand, or that he pressured another nurse into helping him escape. This was obviously not true; Barney knew this. Will without a doubt didn’t have the mind of a killer and even worse, he didn’t have the mind of a criminal escape artist. Will would be fussy and passive aggressive, but never violent or conniving. Will knew he was innocent, but he was still compliant with the treatment.

But now begs the question of who broke him out, which would definitely be asked in the interrogation- God, he was really not looking forward to that interrogation. This whole situation was such a huge shock to him and all he could think about as he drove down the concrete path was what the intentions behind such a horrible act and what thoughts were going through poor Will’s head.

Will was dozed off on the couch where Matthew had left him when the nurse had finished his business in the guest bedroom and returned back to the living room. He was gone for a considerable amount of time, several hours at least. He needed time bolting the door and securing the windows. The nurse looked down at his sleeping patient, resting on his back with his wrists and ankles still bound in soft rope. Matthew gently hovered his hand over Will's mouth and counted the rises and falls of his chest as he slept.

To him, Will was like a rare Angolan python; he was gorgeous and even more beautiful up close than in a cage, but dangerous and a killer at heart, so keeping him at a safe distance or properly restrained and/or medicated was his best bet.

As Matthew gently picked Will up bridal-style, Will suddenly awoke and became aware of his situation yet again, but kept his eyes closed and his body still. He tried to twitch his fingers and found that his strength was slowly returning. He could wiggle his toes and slowly curl his wrist and he wondered exactly how much movement he could utilize. He was carried up the stairs to the bedroom and heard the creak of the door being pushed open. He felt soft fabric underneath him and figured he was being placed on the bed. Will felt hands around his ankles as Matthew was untying the restraints. His legs relaxed as the ropes were removed and he soon felt Matthew untying his wrists.

As soon as the ropes were removed, Will felt his hands fall to his sides and suddenly, his eyes burst open and he pushed off the bed, lunging at Matthew and pinning him to the ground. Luckily, the hours of sleeping off the drugs had granted him the use of his movement again—more so than he'd anticipated. Will struggled in holding the stronger man down, Matthew completely stunned that Will even had it in him to fight back. With a swing of his fist, Will used his right hand to punch Matthew square in the jaw and quickly wrapped both his hands around his neck. He had no intention of killing him—just hopefully squeezing enough oxygen out of him to knock him out.

Matthew gasped for air and clung to Will's hands, trying to pry them away to no avail. Will was proving with every second that went by, that he was not going to be a compliant captive. Matthew's hand quickly reached in his pocket and pulled out a small black rectangle. The nurse suddenly pressed the taser to Will's chest and pressed the button on the side.

The taser sent a powerful stream of electricity through Will's chest, sending him screaming in pain and giving Matthew the opportunity to kick him the gut and push him off. Will collapsed on his side next to Matthew, back facing him and hyperventilating, groaning softly.

Matthew scrambled to his feet, and stared down at Will, rubbing his own neck with a trembling hand. He had dealt with uncooperative patients in the past, but none of them had pulled a move like that, but Will was different.

“...Will?” Matthew asked in between breaths. “Are you ok?”

“...Fuck you,” Will responded quietly, just beyond a whisper.

“Come on, Will. Seriously?! I'm not here to fight you. I'm-I'm trying to help you, like a friend would.” Matthew responded, clearly hurt.

“You're not...my fucking...friend,” Will replied softly.

“Is this just how it's gonna go then? -With me trying to help you and you fighting me every step of the way? How does that help either of us?”

Will didn't respond.

Will had been tased before in his training at the Police Academy- in the back. He had been shocked in his back, but in his chest? This was a whole different kind of pain. His heart was racing, his entire body ached, and he was finding it difficult to breathe.

“Come on, Will. You're alright, here-“ Matthew said, reaching for Will to pull him up, but suddenly noticed Will's entire body beginning to tremble. He was having a seizure.

“Oh god, uh ok it's ok-” Matthew muttered, quickly flipping Will over onto his back and reaching for the bed to grab a pillow and slip it under his head. Will's eyes rolled back and his breathing was sharp and uneven. Matthew unzipped the front zipper of Will's jumpsuit and quickly, one at a time, slipped Will's arms out so he wouldn't be as restricted, his white tee-shirt underneath damp with sweat. He kept an eye on his wristwatch, counting the seconds that went by until Will eventually stopped shaking and his breathing regulated again.

“Will? Can you hear me? Oh gosh I'm sorry, Will. I forgot you were at risk for seizures. Ok, no more tasers, no more,” Matthew agreed, tilting his patient on his side in in the recovery position, bending his knees and putting his arms out in front of him.

Matthew bent down and kneeled over Will, his face next to his face and gently peeled back his eyelid to check for a pupillary response when suddenly, Will spat a wad of spit right in his face. Matthew yelped and jolted back, slowly wiping the glob off his face and staring down at Will with a soft, but hurt smile.

“Same old Will...” he mumbled to himself.

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Chilton discusses accusations with Barney

Chilton sat at his desk impatiently waiting for the ring of the buzzer followed by a monotone secretary's voice saying "Dr Chilton, I have Barney Matthews here to see you."

"Send him in," Chilton responded, sitting up in his chair and straightening out his tie.

Ever since Will's disappearance, Chilton seemed permanently on-edge; never getting enough sleep, his hands shaking unexpectedly, and finding himself being short with everyone he came into contact with. It was a miracle that, of all famous criminals, the Chesapeake Ripper was trusted under his care and the night Will was incarcerated, Chilton thanked whatever god was out there to place such a famous specimen into his hands, and now that Will was missing, Chilton prayed again for his safe return. This escape espionage was an enormous stain on his record and on the reputation of the hospital and himself. He would give anything to see Will back in that cell and the press back to rewarding and praising him for his much-needed care of the disturbed individual. Barney was one of the main suspects of the kidnapping, seeing that he was one of Will's primary nurses and had the most intimate relationship with Will out of the staff- everyone knew it.

Barney knocked politely before entering the room, dressed in a light knit sweater over his teal scrubs and a pair of comfortable black tennis shoes. Chilton silently noted the fact that Barney still showed up in his appropriate uniform despite not being on call for work that day.

"Nurse Matthews, please take a seat," Chilton gestured to the chair in front of the desk.

"Thanks- oh and Barney is fine," Barney replied politely, resting himself in the comfortable chair facing the doctor.

Chilton gave a thin-lipped smile in return and sat in the large, green armchair behind the desk.

“Barney, I’m sure you know why you’re here,” Chilton began, folding his hands together and placing them on the surface of the table.

“Yes, and I’m as shocked as you are,” the nurse replied.

“I’m sure you understand the level of scrutiny there must be on each member of our staff, and not to point fingers, but you and Will were close,” Chilton mentioned.

“I...made conversation with him, yes,” Barney admitted, already feeling the embarrassment sinking in.

“What sort of conversation did you make?” Chilton asked curiously, tilting his head slightly.

“Um... We just talked. Sometimes he’d ask me just to talk about my day, so I would. Or he’d ask me about any drama with the staff or silly things like that. He needed distractions, I guess. The conversations never really got too deep other than him complaining or casual venting,” Barney replied earnestly.

“...You understand that you’re under suspicion in this case, do you?”

“...You think I did something like this? You think that I kidnapped Will?”

“If you’re asking me personally- no, Barney. I personally do not feel like you’re the kidnapping type. The evidence, however, speaks to some suspicion,” Chilton answered, pulling out a manilla envelope from inside one of the drawers of the desk and placing it face-up on the surface.

“What are you talking about? What evidence?” Barney asked worryingly.

Chilton flipped up the page on the envelope and pointed to the written text.

“One week before Will’s kidnapping, I received an informal complaint by an anonymous associate of yours claiming that your relationship with Will may cross professional boundaries. It is stated here, that he heard you tell Will that you ‘believe him’ that he’s innocent of the atrocities he committed,”

Barney paused. He remembered Matthew Brown storming in the lunch room about a week ago, claiming the same thing. Damn, he knew that guy was sleazy, but this was ridiculous.

“I only told him that to try and calm him down, sir. Yes, I admit that it was an unprofessional thing to say, but I didn’t mean what I said, which is why I tried to keep my voice down so it wouldn’t be misinterpreted,” Barney argued.

In actuality, he *did* believe Will. That wasn’t a question in his mind, which was why Will’s kidnapping hurt even more for him. This was an innocent man, wrongfully accused, thrown in a psychiatric hospital, routinely drugged and interrogated, and was now kidnapped and is in the hands of some sociopathic creep doing who-knows-what to him. The thought terrified him, but now he had to focus on gaining Chilton’s trust enough to not take him to court.

“The point is that you forget that Mr Graham is a highly intelligent criminal. He is manipulative and can easily sway a nurse or a member of our staff into committing something of this level,” Chilton tried to explain.

“But...I heard over the phone that there was enough evidence to conclude that Will was forcibly taken? If he trusted me as much as he did, then why would I have to drug him to make him come with me?” Barney barked.

“With all due respect, it doesn’t add up, sir. I’m no detective, but according to the evidence, it makes sense that Will was taken by someone he had either no or little relationship with—someone who Will wouldn’t trust enough to go with or even complete the escape successfully. If Will and I were best buddies as you’re insinuating we are, then he would have cooperated and the evidence of a struggle would not have been there. I’ve been working at this hospital for fifteen years, sir, and I would not risk this job, my freedom, and my life to

attempt pulling off a horribly covered-up crime such as this,” Barney finally spoke, staring Chilton dead in the eye.

Chilton nodded softly and pressed his folded hands softly to his lips in contemplation.

“I’m prepared to cooperate with any law officials. You can search my house, my car, my locker- anything. I’m prepared to cooperate,” Barney finished, breathing out a sign of relief. Damn, did it feel good to get all that out in the open.

“...Well, that’s good to hear,” Chilton responded finally, sitting up in his chair slightly and drew his attention to the clock on the wall above the door.

“I think we’re done here. Report back tomorrow morning for your shift as usual and prepare to go through some routine questioning,” he dismissed.

Barney blinked, not expecting the conversation to end so abruptly.

“You’re not going to detain me? I thought you said I was a suspect,” Barney asked softly.

“I said you were under suspicion, not a suspect, but as I said before: I genuinely don’t think you committed this crime just because you were friendly to Will. It grants you some suspicion, but it takes a lot more than that to convict. You’re still under the radar and will be questioned tomorrow by the proper officials.”

Barney nodded softly and mumbled. “Alright, thank you sir,” before standing and quietly exiting the room.

The guards nodded subtly as Barney paced through the halls towards the lobby and was promptly buzzed out.

As he walked through the parking lot, he rummaged through his pockets and pulled out his car keys. He stopped at his vehicle, pressed the button to unlock the door and climbed in the front seat, shutting the door quietly behind him.

For a long moment, he just sat there, staring into nothingness, trying to process all of this. He was relieved that he wasn't a target in this investigation, but if he wasn't then who was? He tried to recount that night in his head yet again. He finished organizing the medical files... gave his assigned patients their nightly medication...then clocked out for the day and left.

Suddenly, he remembered. Right after he collected his items from his locker and was about to head home, he ran into someone...someone who was wheeling out a dead body on a stretcher under a sheet...and taking it to the morgue- but he couldn't remember for the life of him who it was.

This was all so confusing- he needed to focus on one thing at a time, but the other item on his list was confronting Matthew about his accusations about him. Perhaps, he should talk to him face to face and give him a piece of his mind. Right in the middle of Barney's thought, he remembered.

"Matthew...*shit*."

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Matthew discovers a possible problem and attempts to treat Will. (Lots of cardiophilia in this chapter ;))

Will barely had any memory of the incident the night before. He remembered Matthew carrying him up the stairs to the bedroom and being laid on the bed, but everything then onward was fuzzy. Did he pass out again? He opened his eyes to be met with blurred vision staring at the ceiling. He was in the bed again, the covers tucked near his waist and his arms laying out at his sides and something tight was around each of his wrists. He groaned softly as consciousness finally met with him and he rocked his head slightly.

“Hey Will, can you hear me?” Matthew’s voice rang.

Matthew. Ugh.

Will softly nodded and closed his eyes again.

“Try not to move too much. I’m setting you up for an EKG test,” Matthew informed, pulling the covers down a bit so it was near his hips.

Will had now noticed that he was shirtless and his prison uniform had been replaced with a pair of baggy pajama pants, and even though his torso was exposed, being out of that dehumanizing prison jumpsuit felt fantastic for his self esteem. It seemed like while he was in that uniform, everything he did made him feel like a caged animal. Now he just felt like a person - a sick person, but still a person.

Will turned his head slightly to Matthew’s direction to see him wheeling over a small machine on a cart with a wrap of wires connected to a screen.

“I’m going to put these on you now so stay still,”

“Why?” Will managed to mumble.

“Why am I putting these on you or why should you stay still?” Matthew asked, beginning the tedious task of untangling all the wires.

“Why...are you doing this?” Will clarified.

“I don’t know if you remember, but yesterday you attacked me and I defended myself by tasing you, which I regret doing and have apologized for. I tased you in the chest and it triggered a seizure from you, which is unusual. Having a seizure from a taser to the neck and the back of the head is normal, but to the chest mean that something is wrong with the electrical activity in your heart,” Matthew explained.

“How the hell did you manage to steal an EKG machine...” Will groaned.

“The internet. You can buy medical equipment on amazon for Pete’s sake. It hurts a little to think that you’d automatically assume I stole all this, though,” Matthew added, brow furrowed.

Will rolled his eyes. He honestly couldn’t give less of a crap about hurting Matthew’s feelings. Stockholm Syndrome wasn’t going to get to him no matter how much Matthew was hoping and praying for it to.

The nurse finally untangled the wires and laid them out on the table beside him and opened a small bag full of round stickers. He took out a handful and placed them next to the leads. He was taking his sweet time in relishing how much he was “helping” Will and making sure that Will was observing every step of it.

Matthew tore off the back of one of the stickers, then turned to approach Will, but the patient quickly recoiled, pulling a sharp tug on the wrist restraints.

“Don’t touch me,” he mumbled, almost as a natural reflex.

Matthew paused.

“Seriously, Will?” he replied, disappointedly. “It’s not going to hurt you. Just relax, okay?” He said, continuing his work. He leaned over Will and carefully stuck the two main leads over his pectoral muscles. He stopped and thumbed over the small, angry, red taser burn over his chest before turning and continuing.

“I really am sorry about that,” Matthew muttered. “I really hate resorting to hurting you.”

“Oh, like back at the hospital when you tackled me in my cell and forcibly stuck a needle in my back to sedate me against my will so you could kidnap me and take you back to your crumbly little hideout to do...whatever it is you’re doing?” Will snapped, looking Matthew dead in the eyes to watch his reaction.

Matthew sighed, avoided Will’s eye contact and continued to stick the various leads onto Will, several under his left pectoral and two just above his collarbone.

“Huh? Any of that ring a bell? Are you proud of yourself for all this?” Will growled, balling his hands into fists and twisting his wrists in the restraints as the nurse stuck the various stickers over his body.

Matthew gently pulled the covers down so that Will’s entire body was exposed now. Will looked down cautiously and saw a pair of matching restraints around his ankles tying him to the bed frame and he sighed angrily in response. Matthew glanced over at him for a moment, then faced back down near Will’s feet to attach a lead to each of Will’s inner ankles and the insides of his wrists. He then connected all the wires to each of the points and hooked them to the machine.

“Ok, you’ve had one of these before right?” Matthew asked, pressing several buttons on the monitor and lighting up the screen.

“No, nor do I get why there has to be so many goddamn wires...” Will grumbled in return.

“The different points pick up electrical signals from your heart to detect possible related medical issues such as arrhythmias, coronary artery disease, and-“

“Ok, spare me the science lesson. Let’s just get this over with,” Will snarled, resting his head back on the pillow and staring at the ceiling.

Matthew pursed his lips and nodded softly, turning back to the screen and pressing the button for the test to begin.

“Just deep breaths and try and lay still...” the nurse directed, watching as slowly as a strip of paper with red jagged lines was printed from the machine’s port. Will glanced at Matthew, then down to the paper being printed, then back up at the ceiling. Part of him wanted to hyperventilate and struggle just to upset the results and spite Matthew, but nevertheless, he obeyed and stayed still, steadying the rise and fall of his chest with each breath. He agreed to be complicit, for now at least. He actually *did* want to know what was going on with him- if anything, but he felt like a science project with all these wires and stickers all over him.

Several minutes went by and Will was bored almost to the point of dozing off, when he felt Matthew’s hands slowly removing the leads one by one. Will opened his eyes and looked up at the nurse curiously.

“...That’s it?” He asked.

“That’s it,” Matthew replied blankly, stripping off the stickers off Will’s torso and playing the wires back onto the cart in an organized fashion. After taking off the final wires around Will’s ankles, Matthew politely pulled the covers back up to his waist and turned his attention towards the printed paper showing the results.

“How does it look, doc? Am I gonna make it?” Will asked sarcastically, but Matthew didn’t answer.

Matthew hummed and looked up from his paper down at Will worryingly.

“What?” Will asked curiously. “What is it?”

Matthew placed the paper down on the table and suddenly bent down over Will and pressed his left ear over Will’s chest.

“Wait, what are you-?!“ Will jumped, tugging on the straps and trying to sit up, but he was shushed before he could properly react.

“Shhh, just be quiet for a second,” Matthew mumbled.

There was something very intimate about this moment; Matthew softly placing a hand down over Will’s chest feeling the faint beating underneath the skin, and feeling the warm flat surface rise and fall with Will’s passing breaths and sharing in the pleasure that Will, in turn, felt him there too. Will waited silently for him to finish, uncomfortable by the lack of physical boundaries, but secretly appreciated the gentle touch that he rarely ever got in the hospital- except from Barney of course. He wondered what Barney was even thinking about Will being missing and if he was considered a main suspect for the kidnapping because it was known that Barney was the kindest to Will out of all the nurses assigned to him. Everything about this situation was so strange and embarrassing for Will. What about him attracted such odd characters like Hannibal or Barney, or Matthew for that matter.

Before he could finish his thought, Matthew sat up and brought over the machine by the bedside again.

“You have an irregular heartbeat...lots of skipped beats and sudden races. I’m going to leave you on the heart monitor for a few more hours until I can deem you safe,” Matthew finally responded.

“So what are you going to do then? You’re not a cardiologist and you’re not going to call one over here...or are you just going to keep me here and play doctor until you’ve convinced yourself that you’re helping? If I actually have a heart problem, then why don’t you just take me back to the hospital where they have the means to actually help me?” Will asked, watching in frustration as Matthew began attaching the electrodes again, just two to his chest and one on the left side of his ribs.

“Because they don’t *really* care about you Will,” Matthew spoke, connecting the wires to the machine and flipping on the switch, triggering the monotonous sound of beeping, timing along with Will’s irregular heartbeat.

Will furrowed his brow. “What is that supposed to mean?”

Matthew turned towards Will finally and smiled softly. “Rest for a bit. I’m going to run out and get some groceries for dinner,” he said nonchalantly before turning to exit the room.

“Wait! You’re just gonna leave me here?” Will called out, legs kicking fruitlessly against the ankle restraints and eyes following the nurse across the room.

Matthew stopped in his tracks and glanced over at Will, the faint sound of the heart monitor disrupting the deafening silence.

“You want me to stay?” He asked softly.

Will groaned and slammed his head on the pillow. “*Just shut up and go already,*” he mumbled, turning away from him to face the window.

Matthew smiled and headed back to the door. “I won’t be long,” he replied, closing the door behind him.

Silence fell upon the bedroom and Will immediately began brainstorming ways to escape-until he heard the soft *click* of the door locking.

“...*Nevermind*...” he thought.

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Will and Matthew argue when it comes to Will's treatment.

Several hours passed and Will was still stuck in his usual spot, strapped to a bed, staring at the ceiling, and forced to hear the monotonous beeping of his own heartbeat on the monitor for what felt like days. It was almost maddening. He was stabbed once when he was working as a cop, and he remembered waking up to that sound, but he was so high off painkillers that he didn't care. Now, he was lucid and itching to get out of bed and move. He'd give anything to stand up and take a ten minute walk- it didn't matter where it was, he just needed to move his muscles, which were rapidly growing sore from the prolonged time laying in one spot. To entertain himself, he had resorted to holding his breath or breathing rapidly to slow and speed up the beeping of the monitor.

Suddenly, the jingling unlocking of the bedroom door was heard and Will turned his head abruptly towards the sound. The door creaked open slowly and Matthew appeared, wheeling in an IV stand and a small plastic cart with several syringes laid out.

"Oh god, what's all this..." Will groaned. He knew that Matthew got some sort of sick pleasure from poking and prodding him, which only made the treatment all the more uncomfortable for Will.

"This is just an IV. You're probably really dehydrated, so I'm giving you some fluids," Matthew replied factually.

"You know I can drink, right? -Like I can just drink a glass of water and that would be fine- I don't know why you insist on hydrating me the invasive way..." Will

"Because your next treatment has a high risk of nausea and vomiting and I don't have extra bedsheets handy," Matthew replied.

“...What treatment?” Will asked begrudgingly.

“With your diagnoses, cardioversion would be the best treatment. It only takes a few minutes and has a 90% success rate,” Matthew explained, propping the IV stand beside Will’s bed.

The nurse removed a blue tourniquet from off the cart and quickly tied it around Will’s right bicep. He flicked the crook of Will’s arm until a vein made itself known. He turned around to rummage through the items on the cart and when he turned around, he had a long, thin needle in his hand.

“Woah, woah - wait-“ Will muttered instinctively.

Matthew stopped.

“Will, do you have a needle phobia you haven’t told me about?”

“Oh shut up, most people have a fear of needles, Matthew,” Will snapped back.

“Well, it’ll only take a second- just hold still and it won’t hurt as much,” Matthew said, approaching Will with the needle. He placed a hand on his arm to steady it and quickly inserted the needle with precision, ignoring Will’s soft grunt of pain.

“See? Done,” Matthew added, placing a piece of tape over the insertion point and connecting the needle with the IV bag. “You’re gonna feel a bit cold for the next few moments, but I have extra blankets if you need them.”

Will didn’t reply. He made a mental note to *never* thank Matthew for anything. Giving Matthew the pleasure of hearing the words “thank you” come out of his mouth would be the equivalent of waving a white flag on a battlefield.

Matthew then turned around to fiddle with something on the cart, then turned around with two large patches connecting to a small white machine. Without explanation, Matthew pressed the patches down on either side of Will's chest.

Matthew waited in anticipation for Will to ask what they were or what was going to happen, but it became clear that Will wasn't going to give him the satisfaction.

"...Alright then," Matthew responded after the long period of silence and turned around with a needle full of a cloudy white liquid. "I'm going to sedate you now, just lay still it'll be over in a second,"

"Wait, no, no, no-Stay the FUCK away," Will yelled, tugging at the restraints in almost an animalistic fashion.

"Will, this procedure isn't pleasant. You'd be much more comfortable if you weren't conscious."

"I don't care! I don't want you to do anything to me or my body without me here, do you understand me?!" Will screamed back.

"Do you know what a cardioversion procedure even is?!"

"I. Don't. Care. If you sedate me, I swear to god, I will fight you every waking step of the way as long as you keep me here," Will spat.

"Will, calm down. This procedure is painful and I'm just trying to see that you're comfortable through it,"

"No, you want to see that I'm unconscious so that you can do whatever you want to me when I'm not here to fight back,"

Matthew paused. The accusation that Will was making cut into his soul like a dagger. It was true that he did love Will on a maybe-not-so-professional level, but the thought that Will expected him to hurt him while he was sedated for the procedure felt as though all the windows in the room were suddenly shattering around him.

“...Ok,” Matthew softly agreed, placing the needle back on the cart somberly.

Will huffed, internally proud of himself for winning this battle. There would be no white flag waving tonight.

Matthew pressed several buttons on the monitor on the cart and turned to Will softly.

“I’ll count to three, ok?” Matthew asked

Will raised an eyebrow. He’d never had this procedure before so he had no idea what was about to happen, but he refused to let Matthew give another science lesson to boast about how much he knew and how much Will *didn’t* know.

“One...two...three- clear,” Matthew called, pressing down on the large red button in the center of the screen.

Suddenly, Will felt the strangest sensation he’d ever experienced. A sharp bolt of electricity traveled through his chest- feeling like a thousand knives slicing through his skin, quickly digging into his flesh, then traveling back out, just as fast and just as painful. Will screamed in pain, curling in on himself and squeezing his eyes shut, his skin tingling all over.

“FUCK! SHIT!” He cried, his face turning bright red and his breathing quickening.

Matthew looked down at his patient with sympathetic eyes, but turned back to the screen and pressed the button again.

“Clear,” he said blankly as another jolt ripped through Will’s body.

He screamed again with shaky breath, body tensing and arms tugging persistently at the straps.

“FUCK!” He cried out again.

Matthew examined the heart monitor and noticed the rhythm of the beats slowly improving after each jolt.

“One more should do it. One...two...three, clear,” Matthew repeated once more and pressed the button again.

Will felt the last jolt of electricity fire through him, this one the most painful by far. He opened his mouth to scream, but no sound came out. His eyes widened and his breathing stopped for a moment, a single tear dripping down his cheek.

Slowly but surely, the beating of the heart monitor slowed down to a healthy rhythm. Matthew smiled at the monitor before turning back down to Will. He looked awful. His skin had a red hue and damp with sweat and his hands were shaking lightly under the restraints.

“Will? Are you alright?” Matthew asked cautiously.

“Go to hell...” Will breathed.

“You know I just fixed you, right? After all the work I’ve put into this, a ‘thank you’ wouldn’t hurt,” Matthew mentioned.

“Do you really want a ‘thank you’ from me, Matthew?” Will groaned, turning his head over in the pillow to face him.

Matthew shrugged and nodded quietly.

“Thank you, Matthew. Thank you for proving to me everything I’ve already known before about you- that you’re a sadistic creep with no friends, no family, or life or any importance. You’re a suck-up who’s obsessed with me for whatever reason and instead of dealing with your sleazy thoughts in therapy or somewhere appropriate, you decided that the best idea was to commit a felony and kidnap me. Maybe you thought that I wanted this, or that I’d give anything to get out of that cell, and you’d be right. But I’d rather be cooped up in that prison cell, then here. With. You,” Will barked.

“You know why? Because I don’t like you. I don’t like you, Matthew. I think you’re creepy and weird and your obsession with me and your jealousy is insane and you’re probably going to lose your job and your freedom because of it. If you had any sense about you, you’d take me back to the hospital and turn yourself in so I can carry out the rest of my sentence in peace without people like you complicating it and adding more years onto it since everyone probably thinks I broke out by myself. I’m going to look like an even bigger criminal than everyone already thinks I am, all because of you. So thank you, Matthew. Thank you so fucking much,” Will finally said, slamming his head back on the pillow and staring up at the ceiling again.

Matthew and Will sat in a painful silence, waiting for the other to add another comment, or apologize for their own actions.

Will glanced at the nurse for some kind of reaction, only to find him with wide, furious eyes and clenched teeth.

Will had clearly hit a nerve.

Suddenly, Matthew turned to the cart and pulled out the filled syringe again, flicking the needle and turning to Will.

“...Wait what are you doing? Stop!” Will cried, trying to scoot back against the headboard, but the procedure left him physically exhausted.

Matthew ignored him and stuck the loaded needle into the IV port and quickly shot the fluid into Will's system.

"I think you should go to sleep now, Will," Matthew commented bluntly, injecting all of the sedative into Will's bloodstream.

"No, no no no! Wait! I'm sorry - I'm sorry! Please don't - Matthew, Just...juss..." Will tried to cry, but he was suddenly overcome by a wave of dizziness, followed by his eyelids growing heavy.

With his strength quickly fading, Will tried to grab at Matthew's coat, his fingers wrapping weakly around the dark fabric and tugging softly.

"Ple-ase..." he murmured before finally shutting his eyes and falling into the peaceful stream of unconsciousness.

Matthew stared down at Will's unconscious form for several moments before finally removing the patches off his chest and setting them down on the cart. He brushed the loose strands of hair from Will's face and pulled up the covers slightly just under his shoulders. He took a deep breath and sat on the side of the bed, running his hands over his face. His hands slid down his eyes and paused over his mouth as he glanced over at Will, blissfully unaware. Maybe Will was right; Going through all the trouble to break Will out of prison was stressful enough, but what was he really expecting? Had he known that Will would be this difficult, he might have thought twice about pulling off all this, but that was a matter for a different time.

He sighed and reached over to hold Will's hand. He gently intertwined his fingers around the sleeping man's and held them there for just another moment. He exhaled softly, let go of Will's hand, and stood up from the bed to exit the room sadly, not bothering to lock the door behind him.

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

A short chapter further diving into Matthew and Barney's difference in relationship with Will

Barney left the interrogation room the next morning feeling relief. It went smoothly, a qualified team reviewing over his records, the remaining video footage they could find, and his overall relationship with Will and afterwards deeming him not to be a suspect. He stood a moment in the doorway before he exited, his thoughts interrupted by a “Now Mr Matthews, if you have any further information about who might be of suspect in this investigation, please speak now.”

Barney paused and turned to the team.

He knew that on the night of Will's disappearance, he saw Matthew wheel out a corpse on a gurney to the morgue, and the more time passed, the more he believed it to be true that it was Will. Everything started to make sense.

He knew that Will had a difficult relationship with Matthew and that Matthew felt an odd protectiveness over Will- only a week before, Matthew had barged into the lunch room accusing Barney of being unprofessional. He was obviously extremely jealous. All Barney ever did was just treat Will like a human being and not a dangerous animal, and that was the difference between him and Matthew. Both nurses had a fascination with Will, but Matthew's was closer to a scientist looking in bewilderment at a test subject, or a child watching in awe at a tiger in it's cage at the zoo. Barney's interest came from a place of empathy and sympathy. He found his case unique and he showed compassion because he genuinely believed Will was wrongfully accused. Matthew enjoyed the power he had over Will whereas Barney would disregard his own authority entirely by treating their interactions like two friends sitting down for coffee. Barney still did his job as one of Will's primary nurses, but he'd talk about the weather or his sister's new baby or anything else normal in his life while he was taking Will's temperature or counting his pulse. It helped reassure and remind Will that he was still a person.

This dynamic clearly infuriated Matthew- there would be no other reason to verbally attack Barney otherwise- but was this anger enough to kidnap Will so he could have him all to himself? What was Matthew trying to prove with all this? What if all these thoughts were wrong and Matthew really was just transferring a body? If Barney made any sudden accusations, it would look incredibly petty if they were wrong, but was it worth the risk?

“Mr Matthews?” The lead detective asked, snapping Barney out of his state of thought.

“Yes?”

“Is there anything else you can tell us about this case that might be of use to us?”

Matthew stared at the detective in silence, contemplating his next sentence.

“...No, sir,” he responded quietly.

The team exchanged a look before shrugging and turning back to the stack of folders they had on the desk.

“That’ll be enough, then. You’re dismissed,” they answered.

Barney breathed in a shaky breath then turned back down the hallway.

He knew Matthew had something to do with this- it didn’t necessarily mean that he kidnapped Will- but something seemed wrong about all this.

He knew that the only way to find out with a sound mind was to confront Matthew himself.

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Will wakes up and Matthew and him have a serious talk before an unexpected visitor arrives.

One by one, Will's senses began returning to him; a sting in the back of his hand, a burning in his throat, tightness around his wrists and ankles, a faint beeping in the background. He slowly opened his eyes, his vision struggling to adjust to the new light. He saw the faint outline of the door, the bed posts and the window with the shades drawn. He tried to open his mouth to speak or draw in a breath, but something was covering it- strapped around his head- with a unique leather-y texture. It wasn't difficult to breathe, but as he tried to make any noise, it muffled his speech. He continued to breathe through his nose despite the dull pain in his left nostril. He soon realized he had a tube in his nose, going down his throat and into his stomach. His eyes followed the tube up to the IV post where there were two bags- one of saline dripping into his hand and the second with a thick sand-colored liquid leading to the tube in his throat. He began to panic, not remembering his words spoken before.

His increased heart rate set off the alarm on the monitor and not soon after, the door opened and out appeared Matthew, wearing a dark t-shirt and dirty jeans.

"Hey Will," Matthew finally spoke, walking in casually and checking the monitor again, shutting off the alarm that was piercing through Will's cloudy thoughts.

Will tried to mutter back something in return, but it only came though as a muffle under the gag.

Matthew ignored him and paced around the bed, pulling out a penlight from the side table and sat at the man's bedside. He gently peeled back his eyes and shone the light in each, ignoring Will's faint groans in protest. He turned off the light and set the pen beside him on the bedside and turned back to face Will.

“Follow my finger,” Matthew directed, moving his pointer finger from one end of Will’s view to the other.

Will reluctantly obeyed, glaring at him in the process. His eyes were the only thing he could express himself with so he planned to use them as much as he could.

Matthew then quickly brought his hand to Will’s ear and snapped his fingers, watching in satisfaction when Will reacted to the sound by subtly flinching.

“Your motor functions are looking good, considering you’ve been in a coma for the past three days,” Matthew mentioned, quickly placing the pen light back in the drawer beside the bed.

Will’s eyes bulged and he tried to cry out, “Three days?!” But all that came out was a quiet muffle.

“Yes, that’s what I said; three days. I needed the time to go to work of course. Taking care of you isn’t my only job, you know,” Matthew responded rather matter-of-factly.

Matthew stood up and brushed off his clothes casually.

“I can imagine you have a lot of questions. ‘Too bad you can’t ask them, though.’”

If looks could kill, Matthew would be long gone.

“Do you remember what you said to me?” Matthew asked earnestly.

Will furrowed his brow and shook his head.

“Yes, you do. Don’t try and lie. The words you used sounded like something you’ve been planning to say for weeks,” the nurse answered back.

In actuality, Will did remember what he said to Matthew that night, and Matthew was correct in his statement that Will had been planning those words from the moment he knew he was captured.

“I want you to know that I’m not an idiot,” Matthew said frankly. “I know what I’m doing. I knew what I was doing before the night I broke you out, and I know what I’m doing now today. The seizure thing was uh...that was a surprise, but I’m a professional- I’m not taking this lightly,” Matthew assured.

Will could only sit in silence and stare, waiting for the next sentence. Matthew rested his elbows on his knees and fiddled with his hands.

“I know you remember what you said and I know you said it purely to hurt me. In the past, I’ve just...taken it. I haven’t shouted anything back or argued. I was a coward in not punishing you for it, and maybe that’s why you continued to say such hurtful things, even after I tried asserting some sort of dominance. I’m an easy target to you no matter what I do,” Matthew tried to explain.

Suddenly, the nurse looked up from his hands and stared directly into Will’s gaze.

“But I’m not a coward anymore,” he finished.

Will stared back, at first, filled with confusion and doubt, but the longer that Matthew held his gaze, the more found himself, for the first time, being genuinely afraid of him.

The underlining fear that Will felt at that moment showed in his eyes.

“I’m going to remove the gag, but I’m going to give you a choice in it. If you apologize, and mean it, I’ll remove the feeding tube and let you try solid food. If you try any of that cheeky

shit again like you pulled that night, I'm going to sedate you again and keep you under for three more days," Matthew stated. "Do you understand?"

Will slowly nodded.

Matthew sighed and reached over to undo the gag, but paused when Will instinctually recoiled.

"Stop that. Stay still," Matthew commanded, ignoring Will's flinching and unbuckling the leather gag and peeling it off Will's face, which was damp with sweat.

Will gasped for air, taking in his first deep breaths in 72 hours, his chest heaving as he gulped down air. He forgot how good it felt to be able to breathe normally, realizing how little air he got while his mouth was covered.

Matthew placed the gag back in the drawer and turned his focus back on Will, staring him dead in the eyes, waiting for his decision.

After Will caught his breath, he turned back to Matthew and swallowed, wincing slightly at the pain in his throat from the feeding tube. He wanted nothing more than to rip it out with his bare hands and get rid of it himself.

The two men shared in a period of awkward silence, the only sound heard was the soft, rapid beeping of the heart monitor. As the silence drew longer, Will could feel the tension in the air rise. Even if Will did apologize, there's no way that he'd mean it. He still hated Matthew more than he ever did, but Will was a good liar and he figured he could pull off a decent apology.

Matthew sighed impatiently, realizing that Will wasn't going to adhere, and stood up.

"Fine," he said quietly, walking to the corner of the room where the table of medical equipment lay. He pulled out a long syringe and a bottle and turned back to his patient

robotically.

Will's panic grew at the sight of the needle and in his fear he belted out, "I'm sorry!" His voice cracked as if he hadn't spoken in weeks.

Matthew stopped in his tracks and cocked his head slightly.

"What are you sorry for, Will?" He asked innocently, needle still in hand menacingly.

Will gulped, ignoring the sting in the back of his throat. He began to pull from his skills that he once used as a special agent at the FBI. He could easily get inside the mind of a killer, so why was it so hard to get inside Matthew's?

"I'm...I'm sorry for what I said to you. I wasn't...I didn't care about what I was saying. I just wanted to hurt you and it was wrong of me, especially...since all you've done so far...was try to help me. Maybe it's because you want to make a statement to Chilton or whoever, but it doesn't matter. You risked everything to bring me here and...I'm grateful," Will croaked, finding it difficult to talk with a tube down his throat.

Matthew squinted at Will, trying to tell if Will's words were genuine or if he was just saying it to get what he wanted.

"I just wish...that Chilton or the boys back at the hospital...could see the progress...and know that it's because of you. Thank you, Matthew," Will finally said. Having those words leave his mouth made him feel like utter shit. He was giving Matthew the sadistic pleasure of hearing the words "I'm sorry" and "thank you" leave his lips.

He felt sick to his stomach.

Matthew smiled weakly and nodded, lowering his arms and turning to set down the full syringe on the table again and capping the needle.

“I accept your apology,” he began. “Now...lets get this nasty tube out.”

The nurse began fiddling with the bag on the pole and disconnected the tube before turning to approach Will. He leaned over him, peeling off the tape off his face that held the tube to his cheek.

“I’m going to pull it out on the count of three, ok?” Matthew asked.

Will blinked and slowly nodded.

“One, two, three,” Matthew counted before quickly sliding the tube from Will’s nose.

Will squeezed his eyes shut and gagged as the tube slid up his throat and out his nostril, coughing harshly.

“See, all done,” Matthew said, placing the tube on the side table. “Deep breaths- you’re alright.”

Will exhaled shakily and coughed lightly, still finding it difficult to swallow.

“...Thanks,” he wheezed.

Matthew smiled and reached over to pull back the covers. Will lifted his head and looked down at himself. He was still hooked up to the heart monitor and IV and he had a blood pressure cuff around his bicep. He noticed that his ribs poked out a bit more than before and that he’d lost some muscle mass from being bed bound for so long.

He was surprised to look over and see Matthew untying his ankle restraints.

“What are you doing?” he asked softly.

Matthew didn't answer, but continued to remove the bindings around his wrists and ankles. Once he'd finished, he leaned over Will and slid an arm under his back to try and lift him to sit upright. Will groaned and clenched his jaw as he was brought to a seated position, his joints aching.

“Do you think you can stand up?” Matthew asked.

“I don't know,” Will answered honestly as he slid his legs over the side of the bed.

He laid his feet down on the floor, soles brushing against the soft carpet. Nothing felt better. He'd barely noticed at this point that Matthew had disconnected him from the IV and heart monitor and unstrapped the blood pressure cuff from his arm.

“Come on. We gotta get you up and walking. You can lean on me if you like,” Matthew offered, and slowly, but surely, Will wrapped his arm around Matthew's shoulders and allowed his weight to be lifted. The two men stumbled out of the room and into the hallway. The flight of stairs that met them made Will wince- there was no way he was going to get down there easily.

“Do you need me to carry you?” Matthew asked.

Will wanted more than anything to say no, but he knew that the only way to gain Matthew's trust was to assure him that he had trust in him as well.

Will nodded.

Matthew smirked and leaned over to scoop Will up bridal style and slowly descend down the stairs. Will refused to make eye contact with him as they proceeded down into the living

room area and finally into the kitchen. The home decor was painfully mediocre- stained carpets and chipped wall paint with framed prints you'd commonly find in therapy waiting rooms. The shades were drawn to assure privacy and the front door had three large and elaborate-looking bolts installed. Will also noticed that the sink was about half-full of dirty dishes and the plants that hug by the window seemed to be half-dead. He was about to make a comment about how thankful he was that Matthew cleaned up the place before he brought him home, but he held his tongue.

Matthew paced over to the wooden chair that was pulled out by the breakfast table and gently set Will down in it. He groaned softly and tilted his head back to rest on the crest rail. It felt fantastic to be out of that bedroom.

After making sure Will was comfortable, Matthew turned back to the counter beside the stove and slowly brought a plate of scrambled eggs down in front of Will.

"Try eating this if you can, ok?" He said, gently grasping Will's hand and placing a fork in his palm.

Will lifted the utensil with a shaky hand and stabbed a piece of egg and slowly brought it to his mouth. It tasted bland- 'needed salt and pepper.

"Is it good?" Matthew asked in anticipation.

Will wanted to tell the truth and say that the meal tasted like cardboard, but instead, he found himself nodding for the sake of politeness.

"Can I ask you a question, Matthew?" Will asked softly.

"Of course, Will. You can ask me anything," he replied.

"What do you plan to do with me?" Will questioned, setting down the fork beside the plate.

Matthew frowned and furrowed his brow. "What do you mean?"

"You can't keep me here forever. I assume you have some sort of plan," Will responded.

"I do. That doesn't necessarily mean you need to know it, though," Matthew answered plainly.

Will raised an eyebrow.

"I just want to prove to everyone that doubted me...that I am capable of doing my job," Matthew added. "Now eat your eggs."

Will paused. "I understand," he mumbled.

"Do you?" Matthew quickly shot back.

"You were made to feel incompetent at your job. Whether it was by Chilton or your fellow nurses- they made you feel this way, so you're using me as a way to prove that you can handle me on your own. I don't know if you plan to keep me here for as long as you can or if you want to take me back and show off the results of your treatment, but either way, you want to 'cure' me somehow," Will said.

Matthew didn't respond. He turned back to the table, picked up the fork and scooped up a few lumps of egg and held it up to Will's mouth.

"Open up," he said.

"I can feed myself just fine," Will said, reaching up to try and take the fork from him, but Matthew backed up.

“You need your protein, come on. Open wide,”

“This is ridiculous,” Will grumbled.

“Do it or I’ll put you on the tube again,” Matthew threatened.

Will sneered. This was completely humiliating, but he’d do anything to prevent getting a tube shoved down his nose and down his esophagus again, so he reluctantly opened his mouth and allowed Matthew to spoon-feed him. Will knew that all this was unnecessary and solely just for Matthew’s pleasure, but after all the threats that Will knew Matthew could act on in a moments notice, he didn’t want to test him.

Half way though the plate, Will began feeling nauseous.

“Stop. I’m done,” Will mumbled.

Matthew ignored him and held up the food to his lips again. “You need to eat Will. You’re a bit underweight.”

“I don’t care- they fed me fine at the hospital. You don’t have to worry about fixing that too,” Will assured, pushing away.

“...Alright then,” Matthew sighed, standing up slowly and setting the plate on the counter. He quickly turned away to face the sink and begin cleaning the dish. As he did so, Will turned his head back to the front door down the hall, the multiple bolts and locks seeming to be taunting him from a distance. He wondered how much time he’d have to find the keys if he distracted Matthew somehow. Gaining trust, however, seemed to be the first mountain to climb.

Suddenly they heard the faint noise outside his door of an approaching car; the roll of rubber tires on gravel and the faint parking sound of a car door opening. Will watched as Matthew's face flushed pale and his eyes seemed to bulge. Matthew sprinted off his chair and hurried to the window, slowly peeling back the shade to find a plain black car parked in the driveway and a figure steadily approaching the door.

The nurse twisted his neck back to share a terrified look at Will, who was as useless to him in this situation as one could imagine.

The nurse exchanged no words, but quickly sprinted over to his patient without warning and wrapped his arms under Will's and lifted him off the chair and began dragging him towards the staircase.

"Wait! What's going on?! Matthew!" Will cried, weakly struggling as he was dragged clumsily up the stairs.

"Matthew! Ach-You're hurting me!" Will barked, flinching as his weak, sore muscles were banged and knocked on the wooden stairs as he was pulled up.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry..." Matthew whispered before the two men heard a polite knock on the front door.

Will could tell that Matthew was clearly not expecting and/or trusting this visitor and Will knew that if he screamed for help in attempt to alert them, it might give him a shot at being rescued, but the risk of losing Matthew's trust was looming over it and wouldn't be worth the risk if the visitor didn't hear him.

Matthew reached the top of the stair and quickly pulled Will back into the spare bedroom and hurled him back on the bed.

"Matthew, what's happening?! What are you doing?!" He called, gaining just enough energy to struggle as the nurse shoved him down to lay flat on his back. Will grunted as his head slammed on the headboard. He brought up a hand to rub the already-forming bump on the

back of his skull, but Matthew quickly grabbed him by the wrist and began strapping him down again.

“No, no, no...” Will grumbled in protest as the shaky-handed nurse hurried to tie him down. “Matthew, please- I promise I won’t do anything- I’ll just stay up here and I won’t make a sound- please!” Will shouted- realizing the irony of screaming promises that he’d be quiet during the visit.

The echoing of a second knocking at the door rattled through the house as Matthew yelped out in panic, running to the side table and pulling the unused syringe that he’d threatened Will with just moments before.

“No! Please! I promise I’ll be quiet!” Will cried, struggling weakly. “Matthew! You have to trust me, please! We have to trust each other remember?!”

Matthew grasped Will’s wrist and turned over his hand so the palm was facing down so he could access the IV port he had left in.

“I’m sorry, Will. We’ll get there someday,” Matthew muttered, sticking the needle in the port and pumping the sedative into Will’s veins.

“Goddammit! No!” Will howled in anger, hyperventilating and struggling as much as he could. Matthew didn’t even stop to watch Will fall into sleep before hurrying out of the room and slamming the door behind him.

Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Barney visits Matthew to clean up some old drama.

“I’m sorry, Will. We’ll get there someday,” Matthew told Will as he pushed the heavy sedative into the IV port on the back of Will’s hand. He wanted nothing more to believe Will when he said he’d be quiet, but there was still a part of him that knew Will *wanted* to be found. It would take more than a day to earn Will’s trust and he knew the irony in that forcibly tranquilizing the man against his will because he didn’t trust him enough would only hurt Will’s trust in him more, but he couldn’t take. One little scream from him and it would blow the entire operation.

“Goddammit! No!” Will screamed, furiously thrashing on the bed, but Matthew had no time for his tantrum. He gave Will a quick once over, double-checking the restraints before turning away from his patient. He knew Will would probably be furious when he woke up, but it was for his own safety at the end of the day. Who knows who this unexpected guest could be?

Matthew hurried down the stairs, flattened out his shirt and rushed to the door. Opening it, he was shocked to find his coworker there, Barney Matthews.

“...Barney?” Matthew mumbled to himself, as if not fully believing that he was at the door.

“Hi Matthew. I hope you don’t mind me dropping on short notice- I couldn’t reach you on the phone,” Barney said shyly, stuffing his hands in the pockets of his jacket.

“...What do you want?” Matthew answered.

“I need to talk to you...It’s about Will,” Barney replied directly, staring Matthew dead in the eye.

Matthew furrowed his brow and felt his hands growing shaky.

“What about Will? Did they find him yet?” Matthew asked.

“Can I come inside?” Barney asked politely.

Matthew inhaled shakily, but figured that the least-suspicious thing to do was allow Barney inside, so he stepped to the side, allowing him to pass.

“Thank you,” Barney said gracefully, wiping his feet on the mat outside before stepping into the shabby house.

Barney shook out his coat and quietly observed the half-made dinner and half-washed plates of scrambled egg.

“Do you have a guest over? I can come another time if it’s inconvenient,”

“No it’s fine. They just left,” Matthew answered quickly, but just calmly enough for it to be believable.

“Oh, alright,” Barney mumbled. “Mind if I sit?” he asked, pointing to the couch in the living room area that was stained with god-knows-what.

Matthew huffed, and gestured to the chair affirmatively. “...Can we speed this up, please? I have a busy day ahead.”

Barney slowly sat down on the couch, pulling out his phone from his back pocket and setting it on the seat next to him.

“Right, um, well I’m sure you’re still aware that Will is still missing and it’s been almost a week,”

“I haven’t been kept on updates, but I’m still aware of his disappearance, yes,” Matthew confirmed.

“Well I’ll update you then; I, as well as many of the staff, have been interrogated already and cleared of suspicion. There are a few members of the nursing staff like Jerry and Tom who have been under a lot of scrutiny and are currently being held in custody. Both of them seemed to...have an admiration for Will I heard, but I know Jerry and he wouldn’t hurt a fly, and Tom was secretly scared of Will, so I doubt he’d have the mental willpower or drive to kidnap him like that,” Barney said.

Matthew hummed and quietly paced over, sitting in the chair across from the couch. “What... else have they found?”

“Well, there has been some more investigation into the night of the kidnapping itself and...” Barney mumbled.

Matthew frowned. Why wouldn’t Barney just spit it out already? Every second that he was hear listening to Barney’s drivel was another minute he spent away from tending to Will upstairs. Matthew knew however that the more in-a-rush he seemed to get Barney out, the more suspicious he looked. He needed to be calm and collected, but hold his ground.

“I know how you felt about Will and my relationship and how you believed it crossed professional lines. Will found comfort in having someone around who saw him as a human being. You can imagine how trapped he must have felt being everyone else’s puppet to poke and prod all day,”

A slight twinge of guilt hit Matthew’s heart upon those words, but he quickly ignored it.

“Whether or not he’s actually a killer is besides the question, but we both knew him to be a very gentle man in person,” Barney continued.

A flash of Will pinning Matthew to the ground in the bedroom and attempting to strangle him hit Matthew's memory. He could even recall how sweaty Will's shaky hands were around his neck that morning and the memory brought a twitch to his eye.

"I know I've had a different experience with Will as a patient or as a friend or whatever you'd like to call it and I know you've had your criticism of that- which is fair. I know Chilton hasn't taken you or your concerns seriously when it comes to Will and I just want to let you know that I acknowledge that. You're a fantastic nurse, Matthew," Barney said to him thoughtfully.

Matthew's brow softened and he uncrossed his arms.

"I've seen it. You're always punctual and take every patient seriously and your dedication to your work is something I really do admire. You and I both know that Will and I have a certain bond, but I understand your take on it and if it interferes with your work or distracts you, then I'll ask Chilton to not assign me to Will anymore- once he's found I mean," Barney

"...That's very kind of you, Barney," Matthew replied honestly.

"I really needed to come and tell you that myself, as well as..."

Matthew paused. "As well as what?"

Barney sighed, ran his hand through the buzz of his hair and stood up from the couch.

"Matthew, if there's anything you're hiding about Will- any information or anything at all... you need to tell me now," Barney told him earnestly.

"What are you talking about?"

“I know that you wanted to be as close with Will as I was and if you had anything to do with his disappearance, I need you to tell me now.”

The two men stared at each other in utter silence, one waiting for the other to continue or respond.

“...Get out,” Matthew growled.

“...What?”

“Get out of my house,” Matthew snarled, stepping closer to Barney.

The man immediately backed up.

“I’m...I’m sorry I’ll leave- I’m sorry Matthew,” Barney quickly backtracked, holding his hands out in front of him defensively and hurrying towards the door.

Matthew followed behind the other nurse as Barney scurried to the front door and opened it, stepping outside in a hurry.

“I’m sorry if I offended you- I really didn’t-“ Barney tried to explain, but he was quickly shut out, the door slamming in his face rudely.

Barney was at a loss for words. He scoffed, stuffed his hands in his pockets and turned away from the home and headed towards the car.

Matthew leaned against the door and slid down to the floor, resting his elbows on his knees and sighing shakily. He knew that probably wasn’t the smartest response to have, but he failed to keep his emotions at bay once again.

He groaned to himself, rubbed his eyes and slowly brought himself back up to stand and head back towards the stairs to tend to Will, not noticing that Barney had left his cell phone on the seat of the couch behind him.

Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Will and Matthew have a serious talk about the future.

“Will? Will, can you hear me?”

Will groaned. He was nauseated as hell and had a splitting headache.

Matthew brought his hand to the side of Will’s ear and snapped his fingers, watching as Will jumped at the sound.

“*Good,*” Matthew mumbled to himself, resting a hand on the side of Will’s face, patting it gently.

“Will, I need you to wake up for me now,”

Will cranked his eyes open and squinted at Matthew, reliving the same moment over and over again where Matthew had tranquilized against his will and having to deal with the awkwardness of waking up afterward.

“*You...*” Will groaned, “*You piece of shit,*”

“For your sake, I’m going to assume that’s the drugs speaking and ignore that comment,” Matthew answered. “I understand if you’re mad at me, and you have a good reason to be. I had to forcibly sedate you to protect you and myself included. We’re still working on trusting each other and we weren’t at the point for me to let you stay present while someone else was in the house,” he explained. “One little peep from you and you’d put everything in jeopardy.”

Will slowly nodded, understanding that the process to gain this man's trust was not going to be a walk in the park. Will grunted softly, trying to sit up. Matthew rushed to help him up, untying his wrists and soon after, his ankles. Will stretched his legs and rolled his ankles in a clockwise fashion, hearing the satisfying crack of unused joints. He exhaled quietly, bending his legs and letting his crossed arms rest on the top of his knees as he turned to face Matthew.

"So who was it?" Will asked, now fully gaining attention and trying to sit up.

"What?"

"Who was it at the door?" Will reiterated.

"You don't need to know," he answered quickly.

"... Was it the police?"

"No."

"Was it a friend? Or family?"

"No."

"Was it someone from the hospital?"

"Will, I'm not going to sit here and play this game with you. It's none of your b--"

"Oh god- it was someone from the hospital wasn't it? Was it Chilton?"

“God, of course not,”

“Was it another nurse?”

Matthew didn’t respond.

“Was it Barney Matthews?” Will asked, not expecting a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ but watching carefully to see if he could detect an answer.

Just the sound of Will’s voice saying Barney’s name made a jealous chill run down Matthew’s spine.

“Oh god, it was Barney. What did he want?! Is he worried about me?!”

“Enough!” Matthew cried, standing up abruptly and balling his hands into fists.

One part of Will really didn’t want to get on Matthew’s bad side again in fear that he might punish him with the restraints or sleep-inducing drugs again, but he couldn’t hold himself back from asking questions he’d always been dying to ask.

“What about him ticks you off so much? I’ve noticed it from the day I was admitted to the hospital- you were always fighting for my attention. He’s not an unlikeable guy- I don’t know what about him has always annoyed you so much,”

“How would you know?!” Matthew asked, trying to hide his hurt.

“Um like the week before you took me, I had a personal conversation with Barney where he told me he believed me when I say I’m innocent and minutes later, you came running and begging me to tell you what he told me? And you even tried to say you believed me too, which I know is a lie because you’ve kept me here locked up and loopy on drugs when if you thought I was really innocent, you would put more trust in me,” Will explained.

Matthew didn't seem as hurt as he did embarrassed by Will's observations. He furrowed his brow and opened his mouth to speak, but closed it not long after, realizing he had nothing to say.

"Can I ask you a serious question, Matthew?" Will asked, leaning in and making direct eye contact- something that was very off-brand for Will Graham to do.

Matthew crossed his arms and tilted his head up slightly.

"...Do you believe me?" Will asked genuinely in a firm tone.

Matthew simply stared back, contemplating everything he knew to be true about Will. Both Will and him knew that he didn't really believe Will, but Matthew didn't have the heart to say it to his face.

"Will, you attacked me earlier and had I not subdued you, I was certain you'd try to kill me. The DNA evidence against you is staggering. You vomited an ear for Christ's sake," Matthew began.

"I knew it- you don't believe me."

"How much is there to believe? It's your word versus all the hard evidence stacked against you. Jesus, Will, they found human remains in your fishing lures,"

"So you really haven't listened to anything I've been saying all those times you were snooping in on Barney and my conversations, haven't you?" Will snapped.

Matthew paused, taken back by Will's sudden remark.

Will gulped, quickly wishing he could retract his last sentence.

He was well aware of Matthew's breaking point, so he didn't want to say anything on the border of being rude- but he did allow himself to express frustration at least. He knew what Matthew was capable of, and for that, he decided to quiet himself down.

"How would you know something like that?" Matthew asked.

"...I mean...it was obvious then. How else could you become so...invested in Barney as my nurse," Will confessed.

Matthew sighed and sat on the side of the bed beside Will, who quickly flinched just subtly enough for Matthew not to notice.

The nurse ran his hands down his face and breathed out shakily.

"What am I doing..." he mumbled.

Will frowned in confusion.

"What?"

"I don't know what I'm doing, Will," Matthew confessed.

Will didn't respond.

"I thought I had this all figured out, but...now I don't know what I'm doing," Matthew continued. "I'm just a wreck."

“Matthew...”

“I know you hate it here- don’t try to deny it. Hell, you even wanted me to take you back to the hospital. I thought that you’d at least be thankful to be out, but you hated the idea of being with me that much that...”

Will just stared at him in shock. He didn’t expect Matthew to admit a hard truth like that.

“...What are you going to do?” Will asked cautiously.

Matthew sighed again, stood up from his seat and crossed the room to the storage cupboard in the corner. Will knew that whenever Matthew went to the cupboard, he’d be coming back with drugs to administer.

Matthew, just as expected, returned with a needle.

“I’m going to go out for a walk,” Matthew said, approaching him and eyeing the IV port in his hand.

“Matthew-“ Will tried to begin, hands already starting to tremble. “Please don’t- please,” Will stated calmly, suppressing his fear.

“It’s not a sedative, Will,” Matthew revealed in a monotone voice that bordered on annoyance.

Will paused.

“I’m giving you just a mild muscle relaxant. I’m going to trust you with your consciousness today. If you do well, then we’ll take steps from there,” Matthew revealed.

“I’m going to get you a new IV bag. You’re looking a bit dehydrated,” he added, sticking the needle into the port and quickly injecting in all the substance.

“Oh...thanks,” was all Will could say.

Matthew smiled sadly and turned to dispose of the empty needle and dig into the cupboard for a fresh bag. Will watched in silence as Matthew changed the bag and hung it from the IV pole beside the bed.

“Lay down, please,” Matthew mumbled quietly and Will hesitated for a moment, but eventually obeyed. Matthew turned his attention to his wristwatch for a few seconds, then turned to begin tying Will’s wrists down. Will didn’t object this time, as his strength was quickly fleeting and he lost the willpower to fight back. Matthew rolled over the heart monitor once again and reached over to press the several leads onto Will’s chest. His mouth curled into a tight-lipped smile as he heard the steady beeping of Will’s now-healthy heartbeat.

“I’m going out now,” Matthew said quietly after he’d finished.

“...Ok. Enjoy your walk,” Will replied.

Even those small, simple words of kindness brought a subtle smile to Matthew’s face, but it quickly dropped as he exited the room, not bothering to close it behind him.

Will rested his head on the pillow and stared up at the ceiling, trying to process the conversation just said, and letting the numbing of his limbs lull him to a natural sleep.

Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Barney discovers Matthew's secret.

As Barney drove down the dirt path back into town, he thought about the pervious conversation he shared with Matthew just minutes ago; the tenseness in the air, the shimmer of sweat on Matthew's brow.

Something was terribly wrong. He needed to call Chilton.

He dug his hand into his pocket to retrieve his phone, but found it empty. He checked the other one, but found it the same. "Shit..." he muttered to himself. He must have left it at Matthew's. As much as he didn't want to turn around and retrieve it, he knew that something as important as his cell phone wouldn't be something he'd want to leave behind. Obviously he couldn't text Matthew to let him know he was on his way over so he hoped that the fellow nurse was still home so he could knock, quickly retrieve it, and leave as soon as he could. He only hoped that Matthew was still home.

Barney quickly turned the car around and proceeded down the path back towards Matthew's house. All he needed to do was show up, knock, say "Sorry I left my phone on the couch," pick it up, and leave- easy as that- but there was still something extremely unsettling about the situation that got under Barney's skin. He shook the nervousness away and continued down the road, ignoring the feelings of strange uncertainty that plagued his mind.

He eventually arrived at the shambled home and was relieved to find Matthew's car still in the driveway. Barney parked the car by the front door, not bothering to park it correctly as he only expected the visit to be a minute or less, and quickly hopped out. He hurried up the stairs and politely knocked on the front door.

"Matthew? I'm sorry- I forgot my phone in there! I would have texted you that I was coming but I-" Barney called, but was interrupted by the slow, quiet creak of the door slipping open

on the last of Barney's knocks. He paused and slowly peeped his head in the doorway, looking into the foyer. It was totally empty.

"Matthew? Is anyone home?" Barney called, not hearing a reply.

Barney paced into the living room, scanning the area and slowly entering. He spotted his cell phone where he had left it on the couch and he quickly hurried over to it and stuffed it in his pocket. Just as he was about to turn and leave, he became suddenly aware of a soft, monotonous beeping that was emitting from the second floor. Being the nurse he was, Barney recognized this sound immediately and furrowed his brow in confusion. A heart monitor was a very unusual sound to be heard in a common lower-middle class home and he turned in the direction of the strange noise. It was coming from up the stairs.

"Hello? Matthew?" Barney called up, but being met with no reply, just the slow, continuous beeping.

Barney knew that it was a completely idiotic idea to explore Matthew's home without him in it, especially when such a hostile interaction just took place minutes ago, but there was something in him that beckoned him upstairs. Something was absolutely wrong.

Barney breathed shakily and proceeded to climb the stairs.

He followed the strange sound until he ended in front of the bedroom door. He pressed his ear against the door and sure enough, he heard the beeping loud and clear.

With a shaky, uncertain hand, Barney slowly gripped the door knob and turned it to find it unlocked. He quietly pushed the door open and popped his head inside and what he saw shocked him to his core.

There, asleep, hooked up to machines and wires and laying supine on a dirty white bed was Will Graham. His head was leaning to one side, eyes closed in a calm, natural sleep and his wavy brown hair was hanging loosely across his brow. The covers were drawn up to his ribs, exposing the heart monitor leads and the faint rising and falling of his chest with each, steady breath.

Upon seeing what he'd hoped he'd never see in Matthew's home, Barney's blood ran cold and his jaw dropped.

"...Oh my god..." He whispered after a long pause, not believing his own eyes.

Will groaned quietly and opened his eyes, turning towards the voice. Upon seeing Barney Matthews, Will's face flushed and his eyes grew wide.

"...Will?!" Barney cried under his breath.

The heart monitor spiked and the beeping sped up rapidly as the tiredness in his eyes quickly left him.

"Holy shit, Will?! Is that you?!" Barney gasped, stepping through the doorway.

"Barney?! I can't believe it! How did you find me?!" Will cried, struggling to turn his head towards him.

"It's a - a long story- God, Matthew did this, didn't he?! I knew it! I fucking knew it! Oh God, Will- I am so sorry!"

"We should probably have this conversation later," Will spoke earnestly, nodding his head down to gesture to himself and quietly noting that he'd never heard Barney curse before until this moment.

"Oh god, ok you're right- Let's get you out of here," Barney said, going straight to work.

With trembling hands, Barney pulled back the sheet to find Will's wrists strapped to the sides of the bed.

“Jesus...” Barney muttered under his breath and quickly began to rip the straps off. Once Will’s arms were free, they flopped lifelessly to his sides.

“Come on, Will, I need you to get up,”

“I...I can’t move. He drugged me...I’m sorry-” Will mumbled, looking down at himself and hating how helpless he felt.

“Dammit- ok, it’s ok,” Barney said and leaned over him and ripped off the heart monitor leads, then swiftly shut off the machine in a mechanical motion that he had so frequently done before at work.

“I’m going to carry you- Is that ok?” Barney asked politely. He was obviously trying to keep calm in his professional tone, but Will could tell that there were a million thoughts going through his head.

Will nodded and without wasting any time, Barney tossed the wires to the side, pulled one arm under Will’s legs and another under his arms and lifted him up without any struggle.

As he was effortlessly carried out of the bedroom and into the hallway, Will’s mind was still in shock. He couldn’t believe that he’d been found. He didn’t know if he expected to ever be discovered or not- every day brought up something unexpected and Matthew was an incredibly hard-to-read-individual. It was difficult enough keeping track of the days of the week while in Matthew’s “care,” much less know if something he’d say would offend him. And as he laid shirtless, curled in the arms of his favorite nurse, muscles paralyzed and limbs lax, Will questioned if this was just another dream from a drug-induced sleep and he’d soon find himself to awake back stepped strapped to the crusty bed in the bedroom.

Barney on the other hand, was entirely certain that this situation was real and that was what terrified him, but he didn’t let his fear get the best of him. He quickly hurried down the stairs, scanning the living room and foyer once again before heading for the door. Luckily, he’d left it cracked when he entered, so it was easy to use his foot to kick the door open. As Barney carried Will through the doorway, a sudden gust of cool air hit them, allowing Will his first breath of fresh outdoor air in what felt like months. He involuntarily shivered as Barney

sprinted over to his car and used his foot to pull open the back door, shoving it with his elbow.

“I’m going to put you down now, ok? Just relax, everything...everything is going to be ok,” Barney said, his voice wavering with suppressed anxiety as he gently slid Will down over the back seat of his car, holding a hand under Will’s head with gentle care. Will had nothing to say, completely dazed by the situation

Barney purposefully didn’t pull a seatbelt over him since he had no idea how long Will was strapped to the bed and didn’t want to put him in another situation of him being restrained. He closed the car door and scrambled to the drivers seat, hopping in and digging into his pockets for his keys.

“Ok...ok, ok,” Barney muttered under his breath and he hastily put the key in the ignition and turned it, the vehicle rumbling to life in response.

“W- Where are we going?” Will asked tiredly, having just enough muscle strength to tilt his head slightly towards Barney’s voice.

“I’m working on that,” Barney answered in the calmest manner he could.

The wheels screeched and before they knew it, the two men were off the premises and driving slightly over the speed limit down the country path.

Will gazed up at the ceiling of the car, watching the sunlight seep in and the shadows of clouds drift over. He couldn’t believe he’d been found. These two weeks had felt like a dream he couldn’t wake up from, but now, he felt he was finally awake.

“Will?” Barney asked after a long period of silence.

“Yeah?” Will replied.

“What happened?”

Will sighed and laid his head back. In that moment, he would love nothing more than to talk about something other than Matthew.

“You’re probably going to need to speak to investigators about this. Oh god, I just can’t believe it was Matthew this whole time- I mean, I *can* believe it really- the clues were everywhere. But I just can’t believe that it turned out to be true,” Barney said to no one in particular. “Oh god, should I have taken pictures? I should have taken pictures.”

“Barney, it’s fine. You’ve done as much as one can do,” Will responded.

“I’m so so sorry this happened to you, Will. You didn’t deserve this- you didn’t deserve any of this,”

“Don’t apologize. You couldn’t have known Matthew would do this,” Will answered.

“Not just about that- about everything,” Barney replied, looking back at Will with sympathetic eyes.

Will furrowed his brow.

“You’re not a killer, Will. None of this should have every happened. You should be out teaching and fishing or whatever you like to do- not sitting in here rotting, waiting for someone to realize you’re innocent. It’s been the hardest part of my job seeing you in here,” Barney confessed, turning his view back to the road.

Will sat silently in awe, drinking in the words he thought he’d never hear from anyone.

“I don’t know if anyone has really sat you down and told you this,” Barney began, turning back to Will, “-but you’re a good person.”

Will felt a tear run down his cheek as he made firm eye contact with the nurse.

The car slowly came to a halt at a red light and Barney reached into his pocket to take out his phone.

“And I’m so so sorry about this,” Barney added, tapping in a number and holding it up to his ear.

“This is Barney Matthews with a message for Dr Frederick Chilton...yes...I’ll hold,”

Will groaned quietly to himself and rolled his head back to center to look back up at the ceiling. It was true that he had more freedom at the hospital than he did in Matthew’s care and he was more than relieved to be out of it, but prison is prison and a cell is a cell.

“...Dr Chilton? This is Barney Matthews. I-I don’t know how to tell you this, but I found Will Graham...yes, he’s with me right now...no, I’m not in any danger. He’s subdued...ok...alright I’m driving to the hospital now. I’ll discuss everything when I meet you there. You’ll want to have a gurney and a medical team ready...Ok thank you, goodbye,” Barney’s voice echoed in Will’s mind as he spoke.

Barney hung up the phone and placed it on the seat next to him as he continued to drive.

“...Do you want to listen to music?” Barney asked softly, as if offering an olive branch in return for what he felt was a betrayal.

Will didn’t see it that way at all though. He knew that calling Chilton was the only moral choice and he would have done the same if in his position.

Will turned to him. "I'd like nothing more," he said quietly.

Barney turned on the radio and flipped through a few channels of static before landing on a Bob Dylan song that neither of the men could remember the name of. As the two of them sat silently in the car, listening to soft guitar picking and songs of the forest, not worrying about what would come at the end of the ride.

The minutes fled and soon enough, the car pulled up into the back lot of the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, where lines of police cars, an ambulance, several nurses, and Dr Chilton himself waited outside the entrance.

"We're here..." Barney announced as the sound of voices approached the car.

Will looked up. "I know," he replied sadly.

Barney parked the car and unlocked the doors to prepare for the nurses and police to do their work.

"I don't know if I'll ever be able to repay you for this-for saving me," Will spoke softly.

"There's no need. Just remind me to buy you a drink once you get out," Barney answered, turning to him with a kind, but heartbroken smile.

Just as Will was about to reply, the side doors opened and three armed police men had their guns pointed at him.

"Will Graham, exit the vehicle and put your hands over your head!" the first officer yelled, holding his handgun tight in his grip.

"He's been given a paralytic. He's harmless," Barney called from the front seat.

The officers turned to one another, looked back down at Will, who barely had the strength to look up at them, and slowly lowered their weapons. As if on cue, two nurses rolled up with a stretcher, parked it beside the car and with a firm grip, yanked Will off the back seat and onto the gurney. They placed his arms over him and pulled two straps over to secure him and quickly rushed him away.

Will could barely move his head to look in the direction of the nurses or Barney to react, but just before he was rolled through the doors of the building, the gurney came to a slow stop.

He heard the rhythmic tapping of footsteps followed by the clacking of a cane slowly approach him and he strained his eyes in the direction of the noise.

The footsteps stopped directly beside him and Will knew exactly in that moment who was there.

A long pause drew out before Will suddenly felt a strong hand grab his jaw and jerk his head to the right to view whom the hand belonged to.

Fredrick Chilton smiles down at Will like a proud, demeaning father watching as his prodigal son crawled back to him on his knees.

“Welcome back, Mr Graham,” Chilton sneered.

Will avoided eye contact and gritted his teeth. Seeing the arrogant pride in Chilton’s eyes made him want to spit.

Chilton released his grip and watched in satisfaction as his most famous patient was rolled through the doors of BSHCI and into his care once again. The lion was once more returned to it’s den. All was well.

Chilton then directed his attention to the man in the front seat. Barney saw him and quickly stepped out of the car and walked up to meet him. The look in Chilton's eyes was one of confusion, anger, and relief all in one.

Barney sighed and pursed his lips.

"Dr. Chilton, we need to talk about Matthew Brown," Barney stated in a professional fashion.

Chilton's eyes widened and he nodded subtly.

"Come inside," Chilton said calmly, yet sternly, placing a hand on Barney's shoulder and leading him through the doors.

Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

Alana, Hannibal, and Jack visit Will when he's back in care.

Hannibal Lecter, Alana Bloom, and Jack Crawford waited anxiously in the waiting room of the infirmary ward of the BSHCI. Upon hearing the news that Will had been found, all three were relieved beyond words. They made their way to the hospital to meet Chilton immediately after he gave them the news. Hannibal and Alana had personal, emotional connections to Will, so their concern was on a personal level, whereas Will had always been used as a tool for Jack. His bloodhound went mad, and that's most of what Jack saw him as, but Jack was finding it exceedingly difficult to not feel sympathy for him.

The three sat quietly together on a cushioned bench in the waiting room, and waited for further news. Alana was in a jean jacket and sweatpants with her hair tied in a messy bun, showing that she had obviously got the call while on a jog or out getting groceries, or somewhere where she couldn't change into something more professional. Jack and Hannibal both wore business-casual suits that were just formal enough to emphasize their relationship to Will, but downplayed enough to show how unorthodox the situation was.

Hannibal looked over and saw Alana bouncing her leg and fiddling with her hands. Her eyes danced around the room, from the door to her hands to the floor. Hannibal sighed and reached over and took her hand in his, which caused her to jump and look over.

He smiled and squeezed her hand softly.

"It's going to be alright," he told her earnestly.

She smiled a tight-lipped smile and turned away.

"I know- I just can't help but still worry. All of this won't seem real until I see him," she said. "I can't imagine what's going through that poor man's head or what he had to go through."

Jack scoffed, but said nothing. In his mind, Will was still the Chesapeake Ripper, regardless of his found status, and the crimes that he'd committed weren't erased because he was placed in an unfortunate situation. Jack would be lying to himself if he said he didn't feel *some* empathy for Will, though. Being kidnapped would be a terrifying experience, regardless of who you are, but Jack still kept his head high and stood his professional ground.

Soon after, Dr Chilton and two police men arrived at the door and a loud *beep* ensued before the door clicked open. Chilton stepped through with the officers behind him and approached the three calmly. Alana and Hannibal stood right away and hurried up to meet him.

"Is he alright? Where is he? Can we see him?" Alana asked impatiently.

"Will is doing just fine, Dr Bloom," Chilton began, relishing the authority he held in that moment. "He's resting at the moment. Follow me this way, please."

Chilton turned on his heel and walked back out of the door as Hannibal, Alana and Jack soon followed.

"As protocol operates, our medical staff has given him a calmativie so you will be safe to be alone with him for an extended period. You will have ten minutes and all conversations will be recorded," Chilton explained. There was a smugness about him in that moment, as if he was the owner of a museum full of priceless items that only he could view and he was giving them the honor of being able to witness it's crown jewel.

"Will he be conscious?" Alana asked anxiously.

"Yes, he will be able to see and hear you, but he might be a bit groggy. It's standard protocol," Chilton said matter-of-factly. "He's still a dangerous criminal with several life sentences hanging over him- do not forget that, Dr Bloom."

Alana pursed her lips and turned away from him.

“Please understand, Dr Bloom, that it is for your safety and his own. You will still get to say everything you need to to him. He will be aware enough to understand.”

“It’s still the same old Will,” Hannibal added, putting a hand on her back.

Deep down, Hannibal felt numb to the entire situation. A furious anger was burrowed beneath him, dying to claw its way out and enact it’s wrath on whoever was responsible for what happened to Will. He was extremely overprotective of the man, but found it increasingly difficult to share intimacy with him since his incarceration. For now, he kept his anger at bay and allowed Chilton to play zookeeper.

“I just need to see him,” Alana finalized.

“Of course. Right this way-“ Chilton directed, leading the three down the hallway where armed police officers lined every door.

They arrived finally at a single-bed hospital room guarded by two armed men who nodded softly to Chilton before he entered, Alana, Hannibal and Jack following closely behind him.

There was Will, laying peacefully in a twilight sleep in the hospital bed, wires peaking out from his green hospital gown, and a nasal cannula over his face. His scraggly goatee was trimmed and he’d been bathed, his freshly-combed hair brushed to the side. He had a pulse monitor clipped to his finger and a blood pressure cuff around his left bicep. He overall looked healthy- a bit thin, but overall, Alana was relieved to see that he’d been unharmed.

She rushed to his side, Hannibal following and Jack waiting uncomfortably in the doorway.

“Will?” Hannibal muttered.

“Can he hear us?” Alana asked Chilton.

“He should be able to hear you, yes, however he might have a difficult time responding and processing,” Chilton replied.

Alana turned back to one of the officers by the door.

“Can I hold his hand?” she asked.

The officers turned to each other, then back to her again and nodded.

Alana pulled back the covers to see Will’s wrist handcuffed to the bed. She sighed and took his hand gently, entwining her fingers with his.

“Will, if you can hear me, just know that you’re safe. It’s 2:32pm, you’re in the hospital, surrounded by people who care about you, and you’re safe,” Alana spoke to Will.

Will’s eyes moved slightly under his eyelids and his fingers twitched under her’s.

“What was his state when you found him?” Jack asked, trying to reset the situation back to professional.

“He was found overall unharmed. He’d been given a paralytic, which took about a day to fully flush out of his system, but in general, we’re happy to report that his vitals are stable. All his blood work and testing came back in the clear,” Chilton explained, watching his patient closely as he slowly began to stir.

Will’s legs slowly shifted under the covers, subconsciously relishing his range of movement and he exhaled softly.

“Will?” Alana spoke.

Will groaned softly and opened his eyes about half-way.

“A..ala...” he mumbled. His tongue felt like cotton and his eyelids felt impossibly heavy.

“Shhh...I’m here,” Alana replied, elated to hear his voice, no matter how quiet and slurred it was.

She squeezed his hand and he weakly squeezed back. The small gesture was enough to bring a tear to her eye.

“Will, There’s also Hannibal and Jack in the room with us. They’ve come to visit you too,” Alana told him in hopes of bringing them into the conversation as well.

“Hello, Will,” Hannibal said as he around Alana to stand behind her.

“Han..Wait...Ja-Jack’s here?” Will slurred, turning his head slightly towards the door and creaking open one eye to see Jack standing uncomfortably in the doorway.

“Ughh god...” Will moaned in embarrassment, his face flushing a deep red.

“How long does he have to be here cooped up in the infirmary?” Alana asked Chilton.

“Not too much longer. We’re releasing him tomorrow morning as soon as the cardiology report comes back,”

Chilton answered.

“Cardiology?” Jack finally spoke up.

“Will has an irregular heartbeat when he was admitted. This morning, we tried giving him an EKG test, but he lashed out when he saw the machines and wouldn’t let us near him for whatever reason. This was expected as being violent is in his nature, as we’ve seen...” Chilton explained, giving Will a condescending side-eye.

Will didn’t have the strength to shoot him a glare.

“We had no choice but to subdue him to get a proper reading,” Chilton continued.

Alana turned back to Will with concern. She knew that Will was surrounded by with medical paraphernalia daily since being admitted and was known to tolerate it fine. Yes, the lack of privacy and boundaries definitely irked him, but it was never enough to cause him to lash out.

“He’s recovering from a traumatic event. Agitation is normal,” Alana shot back, defending Will.

In the state Will was in and after everything that happened to him, it was hard not to feel sympathy for him. Now was not the time to demean him.

“His heart rate seems healthy now...” Hannibal noted, glancing at the heart monitor beside the bed that Will was hooked up to.

“Yes, well, that comes as a surprise to us,” Chilton replied. “We’re expected to learn more about it when the test results come back to us.”

Will was getting pretty sick of hearing people talk about him while he was in the room. He couldn’t wait for things to go back to normal and for the attention to finally be off him- or at least not nearly as much.

Jack frowned and turned to Chilton.

“Doctor, can I speak with you in private?” Jack asked.

Hannibal and Alana looked up without fully drawing their attention away from Will.

“Yes, of course, Agent Crawford,” Chilton responded, leading him out of the room as Hannibal and Alana continued to comfort Will.

As Jack and Chilton exited the hospital room and proceeded into the hallway past the guards, Jack finally turned to him.

“What happened, Fredrick?” He asked.

Chilton sighed and turned back to him.

“One of our nurses, Matthew Brown, had what we can only call a psychotic break and kidnapped Will. He was missing for about two weeks and was found in Brown’s home by, incredibly enough, another nurse from our staff.”

“Jesus...” Jack muttered.

“The house has both Will and Brown’s DNA, fingerprints, etcetera, all over it and the evidence against Brown is staggering.”

“Did Will have any part in this?”

“Most likely not. The nurse who found him claimed that Will was drugged and restrained when he found him, which suggests that Will was less than complicit. I predict this will not hurt Will’s case,” Chilton explained.

“Well that’s...good to hear,” Jack answered.

Jack was still unsure about whether or not he believed in Will’s innocence, but he couldn’t help but feel sympathy. Even through it all, Will was still human.

“Please give the nurse who found him our gratitude,” Jack responded after the pause.

Chilton gave a tight-lipped smile and nodded softly as Jack returned to the room.

Hannibal and Alana were on Will’s left by his bedside and Jack slowly walked up to the resting man.

“Glad to have you back, Will,” Jack said, placing a comforting hand on Will’s shoulder.

Will’s eyes were already closed when he entered the room but it was only now that Will actually looked asleep.

“I think he dozed off...” Alana speculated.

“Good. He needs his rest,” Hannibal answered.

“Dr Lecter, Agent Crawford, Dr Bloom, I will see you out,” Chilton replied, extending an arm towards the doorway. Alana gently removed her hand from Will’s, watching as his muscles relaxed and his hand softly opened like the petals of a water lily when the sun hits it just right.

Alana didn’t want to leave him- she felt almost a parental connection with Will as she watched him lay motionless on the bed. She was so anxious to speak to him again when he was lucid and ask him personally about what happened. This she was itching to know, but she wanted to hear it from Will himself and not Chilton giving his side of the story from the peanut gallery.

As the three were lead out of the room and out into the main lobby, Chilton shook each of their hands and thanked them for visiting. He reminded them of visiting hours and times when they could visit Will again when he was more present and one by one, he sent them on their way.

All was right with the world...at least for the moment.

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